SUPER-GIANT SIZED ANNIVERSARY ISSUE!

SPAWN®

200

image

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DIGITAL EDITION

Prologue.

THAT FOOLISH, MISERABLE *AL SIMMONS...*

...HE MADE *THIS MESS!* WHY?! BECAUSE HE COULDN'T STAND HIS OWN WRETCHED LIFE?

COULDN'T HANDLE THE PRESSURE OF BEING A PIECE IN THIS *COSMIC CHESS GAME* BETWEEN HEAVEN AND HELL? THAT WAS *HIS NAME! HELL'S PAWN!* HE'S BEEN A PIECE SINCE THE BEGINNING.

INSTEAD, HE TRIES TO END IT ALL BY BLOWING HIS DAMN HEAD OFF! HE *MUST* HAVE KNOWN THAT WOULDN'T WORK...DEATH *ISN'T* AN END FOR ANY OF US!!

NOW HE'S DISAPPEARED SOMEPLACE. SOMEWHERE INTO OBLIVION.

WHAT I WOULD HAVE GIVEN TO SEE THE LOOK ON HIS FACE WHEN HE DISCOVERED THAT *HIS SUICIDE FAILED!*

I GOTTA HAND IT TO THE MAN, THOUGH--HE DID SOMETHING NO OTHER SPAWN HAD ACHIEVED BY VANISHING! BUT IN DOING SO, HE INADVERTENTLY CREATED AN ENTIRELY *NEW CLASS* OF SPAWN.

THE OMEGAS!

CREATED AT THE SAME MOMENT AS SIMMONS' OWN ATTEMPTED DEATH.*

AND A PIECE OF HIM SCRAPED OFF INTO A BIGGER, STRONGER, MORE POWERFUL VERSION OF HIMSELF .

LIKE IT MULTIPLIED EVERYTHING EVIL FROM SPAWN TENFOLD! BUT THE WAY I SEE IT... THIS NEW OMEGA CAN BE WAY MORE USEFUL. *IF WE CAN LEARN TO CONTROL IT.*

SIMMONS MUST HAVE BEEN *PISSED* WHEN IT HAPPENED!

WHICH HELPED FEED THIS NEW CREATION.

PISSED THAT HE STILL EXISTED.

PISSED THAT HE HADN'T ENDED HIS MISERY.

MAKING THE *OMEGA* WANT TO WAGE *WAR ON EVERYTHING IN ITS PATH.*

*SEE ISSUE 185-- Todd

INCLUDING HIS OWN KIND! THIS OMEGA NOW HAS MORE CONTROL OF HELL THAN ANY OF US.

EVEN THE ARMIES OF HELL...WELL, THEY WEREN'T PREPARED. NONE OF US WERE.

THEY'D NEVER DEALT WITH ANYTHING LIKE HIM...HIS POWER NEARLY RIVALING MALEBOLGIA'S OWN.

HE LAID WASTE TO HELL'S ARMIES.

UNTIL WORD HAD SPREAD, FAR AND WIDE THAT OMEGA SPAWN, THE ***CONQUEROR,*** WAS NOT TO BE OPPOSED. ALL WERE TO AVOID HIM AT ANY COST.

EVEN THE MENTION OF HIS NAME BRINGS PUNISHMENT TO ANY DEMON.

BUT QUICKLY, *OMEGA* GREW BORED OF COMMANDING ONLY THE LEGIONS OF HELL.

NOT CONTENT WITH JUST LORDING OVER HIS MINIONS... HE IMMEDIATELY SET HIS SIGHTS ON EARTH.

ASSEMBLING AN ARMY, SO NOTHING--NO *POWER*-- WILL STOP HIM...

...EXCEPT *US!!*

BUT *WE WON'T!* AT LEAST NOT YET, MY PHLEBIAC BROTHERS.

INSTEAD, LET THIS NEW MANIFESTATION OF SIMMONS CONTINUE TO CALL THE SHOTS. CONTINUE TO DO WHATEVER HE ASKS OF YOU.

IF HE WANTS TO SPLIT THIS WORLD IN HALF--BRING AN END TO IT ALL... ***LET HIM!**** BECAUSE HE'LL FIND I'VE ALREADY SET THINGS INTO MOTION HERE ON EARTH TO STALL HIS EFFORTS. AND WHEN MY CALL COMES FOR YOU, DEAR BROTHERS, TO SHOW YOURSELVES, THEN THAT'S WHEN ***OMEGA*** AND ALL HUMANS WILL FINALLY UNDERSTAND THE TERM "***HELL ON EARTH!***"

LEAVING ONLY ONE PIECE UNSOLVED FOR NOW...

WHERE'S THE REST OF AL SIMMONS' ***SOUL...?***

*See ***Image United*** for the rest--Todd

The present

IT'S TIME TO SHOW YOU WHO I REALLY AM!!*

NO!

IT'S TIME I SHOWED YOU WHO SPAWN IS!!

*SEE LAST ISSUE --TODD

KRASH

YOU NEED TO GET OUT OF HERE!

SPAWN! DID YOU HEAR ME?

GOD DAMMIT!! ARE YOU DEAF?! YOU NEED TO LEAVE HERE, *NOW!!* BEFORE THE HUMANS TRACK YOU DOWN AGAIN. THEY'VE ALREADY GOTTEN A TASTE OF WHAT YOU'RE ABOUT. THEY HUNT YOU DOWN AGAIN, IT'LL *ONLY* GET *WORSE!*

NOW GO! I'LL TAKE CARE OF *FREAK* AND REPORT BACK TO YOU LATER. I CAN HANDLE THIS!

BACK OFF, CLOWN! AND STOP TELLING ME WHAT TO DO!

I'M GETTING SICK AND TIRED OF ANYONE HAVING ***POWER OF SOME KIND*** KNOWING MORE ABOUT ME THEN I DO! THEY WANT A PIECE OF ME, THEN LET'S ***DO*** IT!

WOULD YOU LISTEN?! SOMETHING'S WRONG! HE'S NOT AFRAID-- OF ***EITHER*** OF US!! LOOK AT HIM! IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE, IT'S LIKE HE KNOWS...

UM... SPAWN? I THINK YOU NEED TO...

DUCK!!

THOOM

HE'S PROTECTING HIM?

WHY?

THE OMEGA

ALWAYS ACT ON THEIR OWN.

HELL'S HIDING SOMETHING. SOMETHING BIG ENOUGH THAT THEY NEED YOU.

SO GET YOUR ASS *OUT OF HERE!* YOU'VE BECOME SOME PIECE OF THEIR SECRET PUZZLE. YOU DISAPPEARING NOW WILL MESS 'EM UP. WE NEED TO BUY TIME UNTIL MY PLAN IS READY.

WHAT PLAN?

NEVERMIND! I'LL EXPLAIN LATER. *GO!* YOU NEED TO GO!! I'LL TAKE THIS BASTARD DOWN...

UNH?

NO WAY! NO FRICKIN' *WAY!* SPAWNS CAN'T MOVE *THAT* FAST! MAYBE I COULD USE YOUR HELP.

KLINK

NECROPLASM! CHANNEL YOUR NECROPLASM ENERGY THROUGH THE CHAINS!

SHUK

SHUK

HOW'S THAT FEEL?! YOU LIKE RECEIVING THE PAIN INSTEAD OF DISHING IT OUT?! I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU'VE GOT A COSTUME LIKE MINE, BUT YOU WANT A FIGHT, THEN GOD DAMMIT I'LL GIVE YOU ONE!

OHHHH CLOWN! LOOK WHAT I FOUND.

SPAWN! STOP! DON'T *ENGAGE!!* THEY WANT YOU TO FIGHT--THAT'S HOW IT WORKS!

KRAK

TOK

HA? HAHAH? HAAA!

LOOK AT THEM! ISN'T THAT BEAUTIFUL? ANARCHY IN FULL BLOOM JUST A HEARTBEAT AWAY. VIOLENCE...IT FEEDS US.

"ISN'T THAT RIGHT, CLOWN? YOU AND I, WE BOTH LUST OVER THE THOUGHT OF SPILLED BLOOD. EVEN IF IT IS *GREEN!*"

LIKE YOU RIPPING MY ARM APART. HOW'D THAT ***FEEL?*** WERE YOU EXCITED, ANXIOUS, CALM? TELL ME, WHAT WERE YOU FEELING? I WANT TO KNOW WHY YOU'VE BECOME SUCH A TRAITOR!

HERE, TAKE A WHIFF OF MY BLOODY PULP, MAYBE THAT'LL ***REFRESH*** YOUR MEMORY.

BITE ME!

OH, EVENTUALLY I WILL. LIKE YOU DID MY ARM.

GLORP

BUT DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT. HERE-- I WANT TO ***SHOW*** YOU SOMETHING. I WANT YOU TO SEE WHAT I CAN DO... REGARDLESS OF WHAT FORM I TAKE. SEE HOW IT'S ***BACK?!*** GROWN TOGETHER LIKE YOU NEVER EVEN TOUCHED ME.

THERE WAS A TIME WHEN YOUR LOYALTY WAS NEVER IN QUESTION. BUT MY ABSENCE HAS GIVEN YOU ***FALSE*** CONFIDENCE!

SLURP GLOP

"IT ALSO APPEARS TO HAVE DULLED THE SENSES OF MY *HELLSPAWN.* JUST LIKE YOU, HE'S LOST WHATEVER EDGE HE ONCE HAD.

"YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO *TRAIN HIM!* THAT WAS YOUR *ONLY* PURPOSE.

"TO MAKE HIM BETTER--STRONGER--THAN ANY WHO'D COME BEFORE HIM. INSTEAD HE FLAILS AWAY AT MY 'GHOST WARRIOR' LIKE SOME COMMON DEMON.

"BUT HIS *RAGE!*--WHICH CONTINUES TO FEED HIS SYMBIOTE--AT LEAST *THAT'S* STILL INTACT!"

SO ALL MAY NOT BE LOST QUITE YET.

BUT FIRST, HE MUST PASS MY EASY TEST AGAINST ONE OF THE *OMEGA* CLASS.

KRAKOOM

SPAWN!

HAHAHAHAAAAA!

THAT'S IT! RUN TO HIM. MAKE SURE YOUR NEW TOY ISN'T *BROKEN.*

SKRTCH
CLAK
CLANG
GET UP, DAMN YOU! **GET UP!!** YOU AREN'T GOING TO LET SOME WIMPY, LITTLE BUILDING STOP YOU, ARE YOU? SURELY, YOU'RE NOT THAT BIG OF A *WUSS?!*
GASP
I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF--AND DON'T CALL ME SHIRLEY.
UNH? WHAT'S **THAT** MEAN?
NEVER MIND. BAD JOKE. SO WHAT'S THE PLAN HERE?
YOU NEED TO CALM DOWN AND LET ME HANDLE THIS... *MY WAY!*
HOW DO WE DO THAT?
EASY...
LIKE *THIS!*
PKOW

OUT LIKE A LIGHT. *PERFECT!*

NOW I CAN TAKE ON MY *TRUE* FORM WITHOUT YOU SEEING.

WHAT NOW? YOU GOING TO TRY AND *KILL* ME?

OH NO, I'M GOING TO DO *WAY MORE* THAN *TRY!*

WITH WHAT?! YOUR BROKEN LITTLE CLUB? ARE YOU SERIOUS? *ARE YOU SERIOUS?!*

YOU'RE BECOMING MORE ENTERTAINING BY THE MINUTE. SADLY, THAT WON'T SPARE YOU.

AND YOUR CHARADE WITH THE SPAWN--IT'S *QUITE* CONVINCING. I THINK HE ACTUALLY LIKES YOU. IMPRESSIVE TRICK*!* MAYBE YOU CAN TRY IT OUT ON MY OTHER HELLSPAWN.

I DON'T NEED TRICKS. JUST TIME. ENOUGH TO UNLEASH THE WRATH OF SPAWN'S COSTUMED HOST. BUT YOU ALREADY KNEW THAT, RIGHT, FREAK? THAT'S WHY WE'RE *ALL* HERE, ISN'T IT?

YOU AND I--WE *BOTH* WANT CONTROL OVER THE COSTUME'S POWERS!

BUT IF JIM DIES SO DOES THE SYMBIOTE...

AND THAT'S *NOT* GOING TO HAPPEN!

BECAUSE THE *OMEGA* FEEDS OFF THE COSTUME'S EXISTENCE TOO!

SO A DEAD JIM OR A DEAD SYMBIOTE MEANS A *DEAD* OMEGA! ISN'T THAT RIGHT, FREAK?

CHUK

KRAK

WOOMP

SO YOU *CAN'T* REALLY KILL SPAWN *OR* HIS COSTUME!

KRAK

WAMP

KRAK

NO. I CAN'T.

BUT I CAN KILL YOU. *Heehee-HEE...*

LOOK AT THEM, SPAWN--LOOK AT MY DYSFUNCTIONAL CHILDREN. EACH INTENT ON ANNIHILATING THE OTHER. AND AS MUCH AS VIOLATOR TRIES TO CHANGE HIS WAYS, HE'LL ALWAYS REMAIN WHAT HE WAS CREATED TO BE--A ***SAVAGE!*** INSTEAD OF ACCEPTING THAT, HE THINKS HE CAN BE A TRUE LEADER, AS THE CLOWN! ***THE CLOWN!!*** CAN YOU IMAGINE THE IRONY IN THAT? THE CLOWN NOW WANTS TO BE TAKEN **SERIOUSLY!!** IF IT WEREN'T SO PITIFUL, I'D LAUGH.

EVEN THE VIOLATOR--FOR ALL HIS BOASTING--KNOWS HE CAN ONLY SHIFT INTO HIS TRUE FORM FOR LIMITED PERIODS OF TIME. HE CAN'T EVEN CONTINUE THIS FIGHT MUCH LONGER FOR FEAR HE'LL REVERT TO HIS FAT, POWERLESS SHAPE.

"BUT I GUESS YOU WOULDN'T KNOW THAT, WOULD YOU, SPAWN? HE HASN'T ACTUALLY SHOWN YOU HIS TRUE VIOLATOR SELF.

"HE'S BEEN HIDING THAT FROM YOU, TRYING TO GAIN YOUR TRUST. BECAUSE SINCE AL SIMMONS ABDICATED HIS POSITION AS THE CHOSEN SPAWN, THRUSTING YOU ONTO CENTER STAGE, YOU DON'T EVEN UNDERSTAND THAT VIOLATOR IS THE ***SWORN ENEMY OF EVERY*** SPAWN!

"AND HE PLANS ON TAKING ADVANTAGE OF YOUR CONFUSION. SO, I NEED TO BALANCE THE TABLES. EVEN OUT THE DECEPTION AND LIES, UNTIL I'VE GATHERED ALL THE PIECES I NEED HERE ON EARTH.

"WHEN THAT HAPPENS I'LL UNLEASH THE FULL FURY OF MY ***BOTTLED UP RAGE, TOO!*** AND MY VERY FIRST TASK...

"...THE THING I WILL BE ***MOST*** LOOKING FORWARD TO...

"...IS THE COMPLETE AND UTTER DESTRUCTION OF VIOLATOR, HIS BROTHERS, AND ANY OTHERS WHO'VE EVER PLEDGED EVEN A MOMENT'S THOUGHT TO HIS REIGN!"

"FOR NOW, I'LL PATIENTLY BIDE MY TIME--GIVING CLOWN THE FALSE HOPE HIS FEEBLE ACTIONS ARE WORKING."

SAY SOMETHING! WHY WON'T YOU SAY ANY-THING?

CHA-

KOM

HE CAN'T SPEAK BECAUSE HE'S NOT THE OMEGA, HE'S JUST A REPLICA IN THE OMEGA CLASS. AS MUCH AS CLOWN SPOUTS OFF ABOUT HIS KNOWLEDGE OF THE OMEGA, HE STILL ***HASN'T REALIZED*** HE'S ONLY FACE TO FACE WITH A SECOND-RATE COPY!

BUT HE WAS CORRECT ABOUT ONE THING--MY NEED TO CONTROL YOUR COSTUME AGAIN. THE TRANSFORMATION, FROM AL SIMMONS TO YOU TORE THE SUIT APART FOR ONE BRIEF MOMENT, GIVING THE SYMBIOTE A CHANCE TO RECONSTRUCT ITSELF WITHOUT ANY GUIDING HAND TO TEMPER IT. MEANING, DEAR SPAWN, THAT IN A VERY SHORT TIME, YOUR COSTUME IS STAGED TO BECOME THE ***MOST POWERFUL FORCE*** IN THE ***ENTIRE UNIVERSE!***

FORTUNATELY FOR US, IT'S IN A NEWBORN STATE. STILL RESPONDING TO MY TOUCH.

SHUNK

AND SINCE YOU, JIM DOWNING, WERE ***NEVER MEANT*** TO TAKE UP THE MANTLE OF THE SPAWN, IN THE FIRST PLACE--I DON'T BELIEVE YOU'RE CAPABLE OF TAMING YOUR SUIT. AND HAVING THE COSTUME GROW, ***UNSUPERVISED,*** BY ITSELF, ISN'T A CHOICE EITHER.

SEE HOW EASILY IT POURS OVER YOUR BODY WHEN I COMMAND IT? THAT OBEDIENCE WON'T LAST LONG. SO THERE ARE REALLY ONLY THREE OPTIONS LEFT. EITHER I LEARN TO CONTROL IT. YOU CONTROL IT. OR IT BEGINS TO CONTROL ITSELF. IN WHICH CASE BOTH HEAVEN AND HELL WON'T STAND A CHANCE OF ***STOPPING*** IT.

WHICH ONLY LEAVES ***ONE*** OPTION!

SO, WAKE UP, MR. DOWNING, FROM WHEREVER YOU'VE GONE. IT'S TIME YOU AND YOUR COSTUME GAZED INTO THE FACE OF YOUR NEW ***LORD*** AND ***MASTER!***

I SAID...

A forgotten memory...
from a month earlier

...WAKE UP, SPAWN...

THEY'RE ALL GONE, JIM.

CLOSE YOUR EYES. WHAT DO YOU SEE?

NOTHING.

RIGHT-- YOU SEE NOTHING-- BECAUSE THEY'VE ALL LEFT.

ALL OF THEM? THE *ENTIRE* 'LEGION?'

YES.

WHAT ABOUT YOUR ARMY?

THEY'RE GONE TOO.

WHY?

BECAUSE THEY KNOW WHAT'S COMING.

WHICH IS...?

I DON'T KNOW, EXACTLY.

I THINK THAT'S WHAT SCARED THEM MOST.

THE UNKNOWN?

YES, THE UNKNOWN.

I KNOW.

THAT'S WHY I'M HERE. BECAUSE EVEN THOUGH YOU WERE FREE TO GO... YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO DIDN'T. THAT ATTITUDE'S WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR.

I'M NOT AFRAID.

C'MON, GET UP!

THIS CAN'T BE *THAT* EASY!! ONE ***BRIMSTONE BELCH*** AND THAT'S IT--YOU'RE DONE?!! ***YOU PUSSY!*** MAYBE WE'VE BEEN GIVING YOU TOO MUCH CREDIT. WE THOUGHT YOU WERE TOUGHER THAN THAT!

BOOM

EXCELLENT!

THAT'S MORE LIKE IT--BECAUSE THE GOAL TONIGHT WASN'T FOR ***ME*** TO DESTROY YOU--I'M JUST A ***DECOY.*** A SIMPLE DISTRACTION! NO!...YOUR REAL ENEMY HAS FINALLY ARRIVED!

BEHIND YOU...

"...LOOK WHAT YOU'VE *UNLEASHED* UPON YOURSELF.

"YOUR CREATOR IS HERE TO CLAIM THE SMALL PIECE YOU STOLE FROM *OMEGA*...FROM HER! YOU ONLY *EXIST* BECAUSE OF *HER!!* BUT IF YOU CAN ABSORB THE COSTUME THEN YOU'LL BE THE STRONGEST *OMEGA!*

"YOU'LL BE THE ONE THAT *RULES!*"

GHRAWW!

Ssssss.....

SSSKKREEEE

THUMP

PUSHING YOUR LUCK, AREN'T YOU? YOUR FORM IS ABOUT TO LEAVE YOU AGAIN.

UNGGGFF!

YOU'LL BE QUITE VULNERABLE THEN, RIGHT?

I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU CAN'T *UNDERSTAND THE RULES?!* YOU'RE ON EARTH! YOU ***CAN'T*** REMAIN VIOLATOR FOR LONG STRETCHES. THAT'S HOW THIS WORKS! ALL OF US-- WE ***ALL*** GET WEAKER IN THE ***REAL WORLD!***

I'M GETTING TIRED OF THIS! SO LET'S END THIS CHARADE--

IT'S TIME!

LET'S GO! YOU'RE COMING WITH ME!

THERE...

HOW'S IT FEEL TO BE *HOME* AGAIN? WHERE YOUR STRENGTH COURSES *FULL BLOWN* THROUGH YOUR VEINS?

FEEL IT! DO YOU HEAR *ME?! I WANT YOU TO FEEL IT!* TO BE AT FULL STRENGTH FOR WHAT I'M ABOUT TO TELL YOU.

THOUGH HOW YOU HAVEN'T GUESSED BY NOW IS JUST MIND-NUMBING.

YOU WANT TO KNOW WHY..?

I HAVEN'T FIGURED YOU OUT BECAUSE YOU'RE NOT *WORTH MY TIME!*

SLAP

NOT *NOW!*

NOT *EVER!*

I DON'T KNOW WHY *YOU* CAN'T UNDERSTAND *THAT?!* SO I GUESS THAT MAKES US EVEN!

YOU DARE...?!!

SO TELL ME-- SCARE ME A LITTLE--HOW'D YOU GET *SO CRAZY?*

THAT'S IT, MOCK ME. FEEL SUPERIOR.

BUT NOW THAT YOUR STRENGTH'S RETURNED--SO SHOULD YOUR SENSES.

SO-- WHAT DO YOU FEEL NOW?

I... I...

YES? WHAT IS IT?

I KNOW YOU...!

YOU DO.

YOUR EYES.

I RECOGNIZE...

...THOSE EYES!!

AND VERY SOON...

YOU'LL RECOGNIZE THE REST OF ME.

BUT NOT NOW. BECAUSE MY JOURNEY BACK WAS STACKED WITH BARRIERS--LAID THERE BY MY ENEMIES HERE IN HELL. THEY MEANT TO DESTROY ME AFTER I FELL TO THE SPAWN.* TO MAKE SURE THERE WOULDN'T BE ANY WAY FOR MY RETURN. BUT THEY *FAILED!* THEY COULDN'T *KILL*

MALEBOLGIA!!

*SEE ISSUE 100 --TODD

LIAR!!

MY LORD IS *DEAD!*

OH, I KNOW YOU WISH THAT WERE TRUE, BUT SADLY MY CHILD, I DIDN'T DIE. I'LL TELL YOU HOW THAT HAPPENED ON THE DAY I KILL YOU.

SO, I'LL TAKE MY LEAVE. NOT BECAUSE I CAN'T KILL YOU AND NOT BECAUSE I FEAR YOU, BUT BECAUSE I NEED TO GATHER SOME PIECES. THINGS THAT WERE TAKEN FROM ME, THAT DO NOT ALLOW ME TO MANIFEST MY FULL BEING YET. BUT...WHEN I DO COLLECT THOSE PIECES--I WILL BE BACK. SO SPREAD THE WORD, TRAITOR--YOUR *KING* HAS RETURNED. I WANT EVERY ONE OF YOU I WAS BETRAYED BY, TO NOT STOP THINKING ABOUT ME. TELL THEM THEIR **RECKONING** IS COMING. EVEN GOD *HIMSELF* WON'T REST EASY TONIGHT.

YOU HAVE *YOUR ORDERS!*

ONE LAST THING. THE SPAWN'S COSTUME...IT'S MORE POWERFUL THAN YOU CAN IMAGINE.

LIAR!! YOU'RE A *FRAUD!*

KEEP TELLING YOURSELF THAT...

UNH?

WHERE'D HE...?

shit.

THOOM

KRAKOW

KKGHHK

SHUK

SHUK

SHUK

SNAP

SNAP

Sssss...

GNRKKH!

SLITH

SKR-

SLITH

GRAWW!

SKREE

WHY?
WHY DIDN'T YOU LEAVE WITH THE REST?
I DON'T KNOW.
I DON'T THINK I'M SUPPOSED TO.
WHAT MAKES YOU SAY THAT?
I... IT'S JUST... WHAT'S LEFT IF I GO?
THE END.
IT WOULD SIMPLY BE THE END. THEN YOU WOULD BE LEFT TO FOLLOW YOUR OWN DESTINY.
I'M MAKING THIS MOVE SO YOU CAN MOVE ON.
WHY ME? WHY WOULD YOU...
IT'S NOT JUST YOU. I DID IT FOR ALL OF THEM--YOU INCLUDED.
SOMEHOW WE ALL GOT TANGLED TOGETHER, NOT KNOWING WHOSE SOUL WAS WHOSE. THEY NEEDED THEIR FREEDOM. SOMETHING TO GIVE THEM MEANING AGAIN.
WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU? WHY DON'T YOU NEED THAT SAME THING?
I JUST... I DON'T KNOW.

YOU HAVE TO. BECAUSE I WON'T BE HERE MUCH LONGER. SO WHOEVER STAYS HAS TO KNOW WHY THEY'RE DOING IT.

I GUESS IT'S...

YOU CAN'T GUESS.

THE OTHERS. IT'S BECAUSE OF THE OTHERS--

THE LEGION.

HOW SO?

THE BOY? THE LITTLE ONE? CHRIST, WHAT WAS HIS NAME?

CHRISTOPHER.

CHRISTOPHER-- THAT'S IT. WHY COULDN'T I REMEMBER HIS NAME?

BECAUSE HE'S GONE. AND ONCE YOU LEAVE YOUR MEMORIES OF THEM WILL FADE TOO. JUST LIKE THIS CONVERSATION WE'RE HAVING. YOU WON'T REMEMBER IT UNTIL LATER. I HOPE.

DID HE EVER FIND HIS MOTHER?

CHRISTOPHER. DID HE EVER FIND HER? THAT'S ALL HE TALKED ABOUT. WANTING TO GET BACK TO HER.

JUST SO HE COULD TELL HER HE WAS ALRIGHT. FOR HER NOT TO WORRY.

IT'S POSSIBLE.

WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?

MEANS I DON'T KNOW. MEANS HE'S GONE--HE'S NOT HERE-- THE WORLD'S A BIG PLACE. HE'S GOING TO HAVE TO FIND THAT PATH ON HIS OWN. JUST LIKE EVERY-ONE ELSE NOW. JUST LIKE YOU DID.

SO YOU'RE KICKING US OUT. SENDING US OUT THERE BLINDLY BY PUSHING US INTO WHATEVER'S WAITING?

YES. BUT I'M GIVING YOU A CHANCE TO BE FREE. WHAT YOU AND THE OTHERS MAKE OF THAT OPPORTUNITY IS YOUR OWN.

DID YOU WANT ME TO FORCE THEM TO STAY? TO REMAIN SITTING HERE IN DARKNESS, DEVOID OF PURPOSE OR MEANING? IS THAT WHAT YOU WANTED FOR THEM?

NO.

THEN LET THEM HAVE A CHANCE TO FAIL ALSO.

BUT WHAT IF HE'S LOST OR...

OR DEAD. MAYBE WORSE.

YOU SAY THAT LIKE IT'S A GOOD THING.

IT'S BETTER THAN THE ALTERNA-TIVE.

THE ALTERNATIVE BEING...?

THIS PLACE.

THIS SANCTUARY... PROTECTING NOTHING.

SO I'LL ASK YOU THE QUESTION AGAIN. WHY DID YOU STAY?

I DON'T...

ANSWER THE QUESTION!

BECAUSE THEY LEFT! AND SO DID YOU.

SEE, YOU'RE RIGHT, THERE'S NOTHING HERE. ABSOLUTELY NOTHING. BUT YOU'RE MAKING A HUGE MISTAKE.

SUCH AS?

YOU'RE ASSUMING THIS PLACE CEASES TO EXIST.

BUT WHAT IF IT DOESN'T? WHAT IF IT REMAINS?

SO?

SO WHAT HAPPENS TO THE NEXT SOUL? THE NEXT PERSON THAT GETS DUMPED HERE?

WHO'S GOING TO HELP THEM?

AT LEAST US--THE LEGION--WE HAD EACH OTHER.

I GO NOW AND I'M CONDEMNING SOMEONE TO COMPLETE ISOLATION.

I WON'T DO THAT. SO THAT'S WHY I'M STAYING.

WHAT IF NO ONE COMES? THEN YOU'LL BE CONDEMN-ING YOURSELF TO THE VERY THING YOU'RE TRYING TO PREVENT.

I'LL TAKE THAT CHANCE.

AND I CAN'T TALK YOU OUT OF IT?

NO.

THEN LET ME GIVE YOU SOME ADVICE INSTEAD.

IF YOU DO THIS--IF YOU STAY--THEY'LL COME AFTER YOU.

WHO...?

EVERYONE! HEAVEN. HELL. THE 'GREENWORLD'. ALL OF THEM! THEY WON'T REST UNTIL THEY'VE BEATEN YOU.

THEY'LL SEND THEIR BEST SOLDIERS AND WARRIORS IN A RELENTLESS ONSLAUGHT UNTIL YOU QUIT. DO YOU UNDER-STAND THAT?

WHY ME?

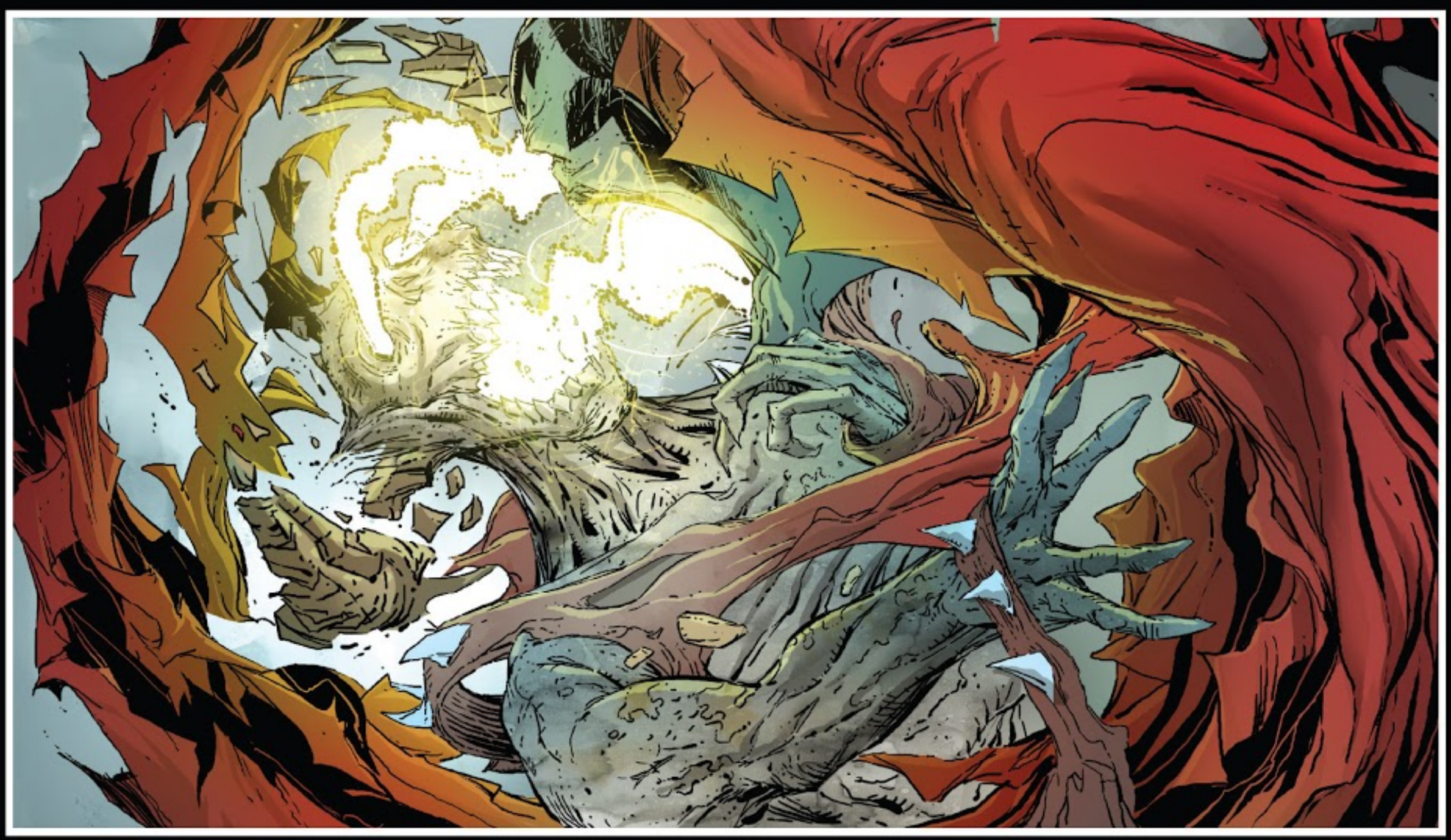
IT'S NOT YOU, IT'S WHAT YOU'RE PROTECTING--AND THE POWER THAT COMES WITH IT.

DO YOU THINK YOU'RE CAPABLE OF CONTROLLING THAT POWER?

WHAT POWER?

THE ONLY ONE THAT MATTERS...

"...LIFE!"
YYAAARRGGHHHHHHHHHHH



"I'LL HAVE THE POWER OF LIFE OR *DEATH*?..."

...LIKE SOME GOD?

NO. NOT A GOD. YOU WON'T BE THAT. THAT'S WHY THEY WON'T BE AFRAID OF YOU.

ARE YOU READY FOR THAT? TO REMAIN HERE ALONE TO BATTLE OTHERS BECAUSE YOUR ONLY CRIME IS YOU'RE HUMAN?

NO. BUT I'M STAYING ANYWAY.

YOU'RE NOT AFRAID?

DOES IT MATTER?

YOU SAID THEY'LL COME ANYWAY.

I SAID THEY'LL COME BECAUSE THEY'RE NOT AFRAID.

FEAR CAN BE A GOOD THING.

THEN THERE'S ONLY ONE THING TO DO.

WHAT'S THAT?

MAKE THEM FEAR ME!

GOOD. I'M COUNTING ON THAT.

YOU KEEP SAYING THAT. WHAT ARE YOU "COUNTING" ON?

THAT WHEN THE TIME'S RIGHT YOU'LL COME THROUGH... LITERALLY.

I HAVE TO GO NOW.

BY REMOVING MYSELF, I'M HOPING IT'LL DISRUPT THE COSMOS FOR A SPLIT SECOND, TEMPORARILY DISRUPTING ALL THEIR PLANS. AND IN THAT BRIEF FLASH, THAT'S WHEN YOU TAKE THIS ALL OVER.

I KNEW IT WAS GOING TO BE YOU. IT HAD TO BE.

WHAT? TEACH WHO--?

YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WORTHY TO TEACH THEM THE LESSON.

EVERY-ONE.

EVERYONE NEEDS TO LEARN THE LESSON.

I DON'T UNDER-STAND.

GOODBYE, 'JAMES.'

AL?

WAIT... I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND. IT DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE. WHAT LESSON?

AL?

AALLLLL!

JESUS CHRIST!

AL?

STOP BEING SO DRAMATIC AND JUST TALK TO ME!

AL!

COME ON. COME BACK HERE AND TALK TO ME!

TELL ME WHAT YOU MEANT.

HELLO?

GOD DAMN IT!

WHAT LESSON, AL?!!

WHAT LES--

SON!*

*SEE ISSUE 185 --Todd

Present.

GASP!

WHOA! *WHOA!*--EASY THERE BUDDY! YOU'LL BE OKAY. TAKE A DEEP BREATH.

LOOKS LIKE *WE BOTH* HAD ONE *HELL* OF A NIGHT.

THE SIRENS ARE GETTING CLOSE, THOUGH, WE *REALLY* NEED TO GET OUT OF HERE!

I HEAR THEM.

THE FREAK AND THE *OMEGA?* WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM?

THEY'RE GONE. I TOOK CARE OF *BOTH* OF THEM. THEY'RE NOT COMING BACK.

YOU SCARED THEM AWAY?

OH... BIG TIME!

I'LL TELL YOU ABOUT IT LATER. LET'S GET MOVING-- BECAUSE THE WORLD'S GETTING MORE DANGEROUS BY THE MINUTE. WE HAVE TO BE MORE CAREFUL. WE NEED TO MAKE CHANGES.

WHAT HAPPENED HERE TONIGHT *PROVED THAT* TO ME.

IT'S SOMETHING I'VE ALREADY BEEN THINKING ABOUT--FOR AWHILE. WE HAVE TO HIDE. I DON'T MEAN BECAUSE WE'RE SCARED OF ANYTHING. I MEAN BECAUSE WE'RE EASY TARGETS. *ESPECIALLY* YOU!

IT'S TIME WE STARTED TO 'HIDE IN PLAIN SIGHT' AND LOOK LIKE EVERYONE ELSE-- MORE IMPORTANT--IT'S TIME WE WENT **UNDER-GROUND!**

EPILOGUE

Detective 'Twitch' Williams.

BEGINNING TRANSPORT OF FALLEN OFFICER. PREPARE E.R.--VICTIM HAS HAD A SEVERE HEART ATTACK! HIS VITALS ARE SLIPPING RAPIDLY AND HIS LEFT LUNG HAS COLLAPSED!

YOU DON'T DIE ON ME, SAM. YOU HEAR ME?

Don't die on me.

Sara.

...PLEASE, I BEG YOU, LORD, DON'T ABANDON HIM--OR ME--NOW. WE NEED YOU MORE THAN EVER TO HELP GUIDE US THROUGH THIS WICKEDNESS. HELP JIM FIND HIS WAY TO RIGHTEOUSNESS, THOUGH HIS ACTIONS SHOW YOU HOW VERY LOST HE IS. BUT WITH YOUR PATIENCE, I PROMISE YOU--WITH EVERY FIBER OF MY BEING-- HE'LL SOON SERVE YOUR GLORY...

Marc.

WHO WAS ON THE PHONE?

CHANNEL 5. THEY WANT HIM ON THEIR AFTERNOON SHOW.

AND...?

AND THEY'LL PAY *TWENTY* GRAND IF HE COMES IN THE NEXT 48 HOURS.

Clown.

PARTNER-- WE'VE GOT PROBLEMS...

The FREAK.

I BELIEVE YOU HAVE SOMETHING THAT *BELONGS* TO ME.

Everything to be continued...

image

201

DIGITAL EDITION

SPAWN®

Capullo
Fotos McFarlane

YOU READY FOR THIS?

I GUESS SO. I JUST-- I DON'T KNOW IF I'LL BE GOOD, THOUGH.

NO NEED TO BE NERVOUS--LOTS OF MY GUESTS FEEL THE SAME WAY. JUST BE YOURSELF. TAKE WHATEVER TIME YOU NEED TO ANSWER THE QUESTIONS, AND REMEMBER--WE'RE TALKING ABOUT *YOU*.

SO YOU'RE THE EXPERT HERE, NOT ME.

THANKS. THAT HELPS A LOT.

YOU'LL BE FINE. I'LL TRY AND MAKE THIS FUN.

THE KARLENE PHILLIPS SHOW

AND WE'RE LIVE IN--

THREE--

GOOD MORNING, EVERYONE. THANKS FOR JOINING ME HERE ON THIS RATHER CHILLY THURSDAY MORNING. TODAY'S SHOW PROMISES TO BE ONE OF OUR MORE INTERESTING ONES. MYSTERY, TRAGEDY, HOPE AND A LITTLE OF THE SUPERNATURAL ARE ALL INVOLVED IN THIS STORY. AND WITH A BIT OF LUCK-- TODAY'S SHOW WILL ALSO HAVE A TOUCH OF THE 'MIRACULOUS.'

I'M SURE SOME OF YOU MAY HAVE ***ALREADY*** READ OR HEARD ABOUT OUR NEXT GUEST. HE'S BEEN AT THE CENTER OF SOME ***RATHER*** SPECTACULAR SITUATIONS! FIRST, WITH HIS CONNECTION TO OVER A DOZEN HOSPITAL PATIENTS, WHO WERE SOMEHOW CURED OF ALL THEIR ALIMENTS. THEN SECONDLY, HE WAS MYSTERIOUSLY ATTACKED BY AN UNIDENTIFIED SUPER-VILLIAN.

SO WITHOUT ANY FURTHER ADO-- ***PLEASE WELCOME*** MR. JIM DOWNING!

KARLENE PHILLIPS

GOOD MORNING, JIM. THANKS FOR COMING HERE TODAY.

MY PLEASURE. THANKS FOR HAVING ME.

SO LET'S GET RIGHT TO IT. THOUGH YOU HAVE A NAME--YOU SAID THAT SEEMS TO BE THE ONLY INFORMATION YOU ACTUALLY KNOW ABOUT YOURSELF.

YOU WOKE FROM A COMA FIVE WEEKS AGO AND NO ONE--NOT EVEN YOUR DOCTORS-- SEEM TO KNOW WHERE YOU CAME FROM. TELL US ABOUT THAT.

RIGHT. THEY SAY MY RECORDS WERE LOST IN THEIR COMPUTER SYSTEM, AND WHATEVER PAPER FILES THEY HAD BURNT IN THE FIRE.

THE KARLENE PHILLIPS SHOW

JIM DOWNING

YOU'RE SPEAKING OF THE ST. ANTHONY'S HOSPITAL FIRE*?

YES. FROM THERE I WAS MOVED TO A COUPLE DIFFERENT HOSPITALS AND STAYED IN A COUPLE DIFFERENT ROOMS--UNTIL THEY RELEASED ME.

AND IT'S THE PATIENTS IN THOSE VERY SAME ROOMS YOU STAYED IN THAT WERE--AND I QUOTE--"INEXPLICABLY CURED," ACCORDING TO VARIOUS DOCTORS.

*Issue 187--Todd

THAT'S WHAT I'VE BEEN TOLD. THOUGH I HAD NO IDEA AT THE TIME.

WHAT'S THAT MAKE YOU THEN? A HERO? SAVIOR? THE SECOND COMING? REPORTERS ARE CALLING YOU ALL OF THESE.

A FEW HAVE EVEN GONE SO FAR AS TO CALL YOU THE NEXT HOT 'SEX SYMBOL.'

I'M SURE MORE THAN A FEW YOUNG LADIES IN THE AUDIENCE WILL AGREE WITH THAT.

I--CAN'T COMMENT ON THAT.

AND HE'S HUMBLE, TOO. LADIES, ARE YOU LISTENING?

ON A MORE SERIOUS NOTE--WALK US THROUGH YOUR 'AWAKENING.'

I WAS A PATIENT AT ST. ANTHONY'S. BEEN IN A COMA THERE SO LONG THE STAFF DIDN'T KNOW WHEN I'D ARRIVED. I'D BEEN THERE LONGER THAN ANY OF THEM.

WHEN I CAME OUT OF IT, THE DOCTORS RAN A BATTERY OF TESTS...

...AND I WAS BASICALLY TOLD THEY COULDN'T FIND ANYTHING WRONG WITH ME.

DO YOU KNOW WHY NONE OF YOUR DOCTORS ARE WILLING TO GO ON THE RECORD WITH A COMMENT?

I DON'T.

AND NONE OF THEM HAS THE SLIGHTEST CLUE WHY YOU'RE SO FIT OR WHO YOU ARE?

BELIEVE ME, I'VE ASKED THE SAME QUESTIONS.

WELL, WE'RE HERE TO HELP.

CAN I GET THAT NUMBER UP ON SCREEN?

THE KARLENE PHILLIPS SHOW

THAT'S IT. THANK YOU.

Have you seen this man before? Please help us by calling 1-800-John Doe

OUR MISSION IS TO FIND SOMEONE OUT IN AMERICA WHO HAS MET YOU BEFORE OR HAS SOME INFO THAT WILL LEAD YOU TO FINDING YOUR IDENTITY. WE'LL BE KEEPING THE NUMBER UP FOR MOST OF THE SHOW.

IN THE MEANTIME, WHAT DO YOU RECALL OF YOUR PAST?

THAT'S THE WEIRD PART. THE NORMAL THINGS LIKE GETTING DRESSED--USING ELECTRONICS--DAILY ACTIVITIES, NONE OF THOSE MEMORIES SEEM TO BE LOST.

BUT ALL MY PERSONAL ONES ARE.

I DON'T KNOW IF I'M MARRIED. HAVE KIDS. SIBLINGS. PARENTS WHO ARE ALIVE. I CAN'T PULL ANY IMAGES OF WHERE I MIGHT'VE LIVED. NOTHING.

DON'T KNOW MY CORRECT AGE --OR IF JIM DOWNING IS EVEN MY REAL NAME.

IT'S LIKE SOMEONE SLICED AWAY A PIECE OF MY BRAIN.

YOU THIS GUY'S MANAGER?

uh--YEAH. SORT OF. MARC. NICE TO MEET YOU.

LIKE-WISE.

STAFF

YOUR GUY'S A REAL NATURAL. VERY SYMPATHETIC. THAT'S GOOD. IT'LL MAKE THE ENDING THAT MUCH BETTER.

BETTER HOW?

YOU KNOW--BIG CLIMAX. MEMORABLE FINISH. THE KIND OF THINGS ADVERTISERS EAT UP. IT'LL BE GREAT.

ESPECIALLY WHEN SOMEONE CALLS AND LETS EVERYONE KNOW WHO THIS "JOHN DOE" IS.

LET ME TOUCH UPON ANOTHER PIECE OF THIS PUZZLE, JIM...

THE KARLENE PHILLIPS SHOW

Have you seen this man before? Please help us by calling

1-800-John Doe

If you have any information on this m

...EYE-WITNESSES ALSO SAID YOU FLEW AWAY AS THE BUILDING COLLAPSED LAST WEEK...

...THOUGH EVERY CAMERA AND CELL PHONE AT THE SITE SEEMS TO HAVE MALFUNCTIONED AT THE EXACT SAME TIME. SO THERE'S NO VISUAL RECORD OF THAT. WOULD YOU CARE TO COMMENT?

ONE THING I'VE LEARNED THE PAST FEW DAYS IS THAT THE MEDIA TENDS TO OVERSTATE MANY THINGS.

SO YOU'RE NOT A SUPER HERO, LIKE THE FEW THAT HAVE VISITED THIS CITY?

FAR FROM IT.

THE KARLENE PHILLIPS SHOW Have you seen this man before? Please help us by calling 1-800-John Doe If you have any information on this matter

BUT YOUR HEALING POWER--WHERE DOES THAT COME FROM?

HOW DOES IT WORK?

TO BE HONEST--

IT'S ALL BEEN BY ACCIDENT.

I WASN'T DOING IT WILLINGLY--OR FOR SOME HEROIC CAUSE. I JUST STAYED IN THE SAME ROOM WITH OTHER SICK PEOPLE. A FEW OTHERS I MAY HAVE ACCIDENTALLY TOUCHED, BUT AT NO TIME DID I DO IT PURPOSEFULLY. SO--IF THEY WANT TO THROW AROUND THE 'HERO' LABEL--TELL THEM TO SAVE IT FOR OUR POLICE, FIREMEN AND SOLDIERS FIGHTING OVERSEAS. THEY HELP SAVE PEOPLE ***EVERY DAY.***

I'VE DONE NOTHING TO DESERVE THAT LABEL.

YOU'RE BEING MUCH TOO MODEST. YOU GAVE A SECOND CHANCE TO THOSE THAT MIGHT NOT OTHERWISE HAVE HAD IT. YOU CHANGED THEIR LIVES--AND THEIR LOVED ONES FOR THE BETTER. SOME WOULD LIKE US TO ATTEMPT TO RETURN THAT FAVOR...

AND SO I'D LIKE TO ONCE AGAIN ASK MY VIEWING AUDIENCE FOR THEIR HELP. IF YOU HAVE SEEN THIS MAN BEFORE PLEASE CALL THE NUMBER ON YOUR SCREEN.

BEFORE WE BREAK FOR COMMERCIAL, GIVE US ONE WORD TO DESCRIBE YOUR CURRENT PRIVATE LIFE.

ONE WORD?

THE KARLENE PHILLIPS SHOW Have you seen this man before? Please help us by calling 1-800-John Doe If you have any information on this matter

HOW ABOUT...

DISHONEST.

AND WE'RE CLEAR.

THE KARLENE PHILLIPS SHOW JIM DOWNING

Three hours earlier. 6:45 a.m.

MARC'S GOING TO KILL ME WHEN HE FINDS OUT I SNUCK OUT WITHOUT HIM.

6:53 a.m.

7:07 a.m.

FINALLY.

TAXI

WOW! SERIOUSLY?

7:22 a.m.

HEY...!

uhh-- YEAH?

YOU NEED DIRECTIONS OR SOME-THING? I NOTICED YOU'VE BEEN STANDING THERE AWHILE.

NO. JUST-- CAN'T SEEM TO FIND A CAB.

IT CAN BE TOUGH AT THIS TIME OF DAY ON SIDE STREETS.

BUT LET ME ASK YOU-- YOU LOOK FAMILIAR-- WHY IS THAT...?

WAIT! DON'T TELL ME..! YOU'RE THAT GUY, RIGHT? THE ONE FROM THE NEWSPAPERS AND TV REPORTS!

YOU, LIKE-- YOU HEAL PEOPLE--THAT'S WHAT I READ, ISN'T IT?!

uhh...

LOOK--WHY DON'T YOU HOP IN. I'LL GIVE YOU A RIDE TO WHEREVER YOU'RE HEADED.

THAT'S FINE, I'M...

C'MON! IT'S NO PROBLEM. YOU'LL FREEZE YOUR ***ASS OFF*** OUT HERE.

OKAY. THANKS.

SO WHERE WE GOING?

SEVENTH AND FORTY-THIRD, I THINK.

GOT IT. WHAT'RE YOU DOING THERE?

JUST SOME INTERVIEW.

YEAH--WITH WHO?

IT'S A MORNING SHOW. THE LADY'S NAME IS--UH, KARLENE SOMETHING.

KARLENE PHILLIPS?!

THAT'S IT.

NICE! SHE'S A PRETTY BIG DEAL AROUND HERE. DOESN'T TALK TO JUST ANYONE. SO YOU'RE BECOMING QUITE A 'BIG SHOT,' I GUESS.

I GUESS SO.

OH...! BEFORE I FORGET--THAT WAS PRETTY CLASSY WHAT YOU DID THE OTHER DAY. COMING IN ON YOUR OWN TO ANSWER QUESTIONS ABOUT THAT VILLAIN'S ATTACK.* I HEARD THEY LOST TRACK OF YOU AFTER THE BUILDING COLLAPSED. THEY SAID YOU CAME IN BEFORE WE WENT LOOKING FOR YOU.

*See issues 198 and 199 --Todd

NOT A LOT OF GUYS WOULD DO THAT, WHICH MAKES YOU OKAY IN MY BOOK.

YOU WORK AT THAT PRECINCT?

NAH! BUT WE HEAR THE STUFF THAT MATTERS. AND DON'T WORRY, I'M SURE THE FEDS WILL FIGURE OUT WHY THAT PSYCHO ATTACKED YOU. YOU THINK MAYBE IT HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH YOUR POWERS?

MY WHAT...?

YOUR POWERS--OR WHATEVER YOU CALL THEM--THE THING THAT MAKES YOU HEAL ALL THOSE SICK FOLKS. THE GUY'S PROBABLY JEALOUS OF YOU. HELLUVA WAY TO SHOW IT, DON'T YOU THINK? NOT THAT I'M MAKING *LIGHT* OF IT, MIND YOU.

IT'S OKAY.

DO WHAT?

SO HOW DO YOU DO IT?

HEAL THEM. THOSE OLD FOLKS! PAPER SAYS THEY'RE IN NEAR PERFECT CONDITION WHEN YOU'RE DONE WITH THEM. THAT--IT KINDA MAKES YOU LIKE *GOD,* DOESN'T IT--IF YOU CAN DO THAT? THAT'S GOT TO BE FREAKY, NO?

IT'S--COMPLICATED.

I BET! MAKES YOU A BIT OF A ***MARKED MAN*** TOO, RIGHT?

NOT REALLY.

DON'T BULLSHIT ME! A GUY LIKE YOU COMES ALONG--SOMEONE IN THIS CITY'S GOING TO PAY ATTENTION. AND I'M NOT TALKING ABOUT THE GOOD GUYS. SO--ANYONE MESSING WITH YOU?

I'M FINE. REALLY.

MAKE YOU A DEAL--JUST HEAR ME OUT! YOU GIVE ME THE NAME OF THOSE HASSLING YOU--I CAN LOOK 'EM UP. THEY GOT A RAP SHEET, THEN WE DIVE IN A LITTLE DEEPER. THEY DON'T HAVE A RECORD, THEN THAT'S THAT. YOU CAN DEAL WITH YOUR OWN SQUABBLES. HOW'S THAT?
SURE--YEAH, I GUESS.
SO WHO'S THE PERP?
THERE'S A HOLTZMAN--HIS FIRST NAME'S--
HUH?
FRANKIE?
HIS FIRST NAME. IS IT FRANKIE?
I THINK SO.
JESUS H.! THAT SCUMBAG PIECE OF SHIT!
YOU KNOW HIM?
YEAH! AND SO DOES ***EVERY PRECINCT*** IN THE CITY! GOT A RAP SHEET STRETCHING TO NEW JERSEY!
HOLD TIGHT! I'M GOING TO DO YOU A FAVOR.

JUST HAPPEN TO BE IN FRANKIE'S NEIGHBORHOOD. I'M GOING TO PAY HIM A LITTLE VISIT FOR YOU.
ASK HIM WHY HE HASSLED YOU WEDNESDAY.
SIT TIGHT. I'LL BE RIGHT BACK.

A few minutes later.

KING OF ALL MEDIA IS BACK
L-I-D-A-S- LIFE IS PEACHY
HOW'D HE KNOW IT WAS WEDNESDAY?

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK

WHO IS IT?
OPEN THE DOOR, FRANKIE.
WHAT THE HELL YOU DOING HERE?!
CLEANING UP YOUR MESS.
HE'S GOT YOUR NAME, FRANKIE. HOW'D *THAT* HAPPEN?
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE *TALKING ABOUT!* I DIDN'T...
SHUT UP! JUST SHUT THE F**K UP! YOU GOT THE CASE?
YEAH. SURE--OF COURSE I'VE GOT IT.
BUT THEY SAID PICK UP WASN'T GOING TO BE FOR ANOTHER SIX HOURS.
SCHEDULE'S BEEN MOVED UP.

NO ONE TOLD ME.

YOU GUYS *ALWAYS* DO THIS! FIRST YOU WANT ONE THING, THEN IT'S ANOTHER! CHRIST! MAKE UP YOUR MINDS.

YOU THINK EVERYONE CAN JUST STOP WHAT THEY'RE DOING AND REWORK THINGS JUST BECAUSE YOU GUYS CAN'T GET YOUR ACT TOGETHER! IT'S *RIDICULOUS!* AND I'M NOT THE ONLY ONE SAYING THAT.

DON'T KNOW WHAT TO TELL YOU ABOUT THAT.

I'M JUST HERE FOR THE PICK UP.

DID YOU BRING THE CASH?

NO.

WHAT...?!! THOSE ASSHOLES!

THEY SAID I'D HAVE MY MONEY TODAY! ALL OF IT! THAT'S IT--I'M TALKIN' TO YOUR BOSS. THIS CAN'T GO ON LIKE THIS.

YOU KNOW HOW HARD IT WAS TO GET THAT CASE? HOW MANY FAVORS I HAD TO CALL IN? AND THAT WAS JUST TO BE ABLE TO MOVE IT ACROSS TOWN. NO ONE EVEN KNOWS WHAT THE HELL IS IN IT!

I DID MY PART, SO I WANT MY CASH.

DON'T WORRY--I'M SURE YOU'LL GET WHAT'S COMIN' TO YOU--

KRAK

F*CKIN' LOSER.

HOW'D YOU KNOW HE ATTACKED ME WEDNES-DAY?

AWW! THERE YOU ARE, JIMMY-- RIGHT ON CUE! OR SHOULD I CALL YOU...

PATIENT 47.

JESUS! DON'T LOOK SO SHOCKED! LIKE I SAID--SOMEONE LIKE YOU DOESN'T GO UNNOTICED.

YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW TIRED I'M GETTING OF ALL THIS BULLSHIT.

NOW MOVE AWAY FROM THAT CASE.

IT'S NOT LIKE I'VE NEVER SEEN A HELLSPAWN BEFORE.

YOU AND I--WE AIN'T SO SPECIAL.

YOU'RE NOT-- HUMAN.

HE ONCE WAS. A LONG TIME AGO.

THOUGH, THAT'S NOT IMPORTANT NOW.

WHAT IS IMPORTANT, MR. DOWNING, IS THAT YOU LISTEN VERY CAREFULLY TO WHAT I'M ABOUT TO TELL YOU.

BY NOW YOU MUST BE AWARE-- ON SOME LEVEL-- THAT THERE ARE FORCES AT WORK ALL AROUND YOU. EACH ONE OF THEM INTENT ON DOMINATING EVERYTHING AND EVERY ONE THEY TOUCH. THE HARDEST PART IS TRYING TO DISTINGUISH ONE SIDE FROM THE OTHER.

BECAUSE THEY TEACH FAIRLY BLACK AND WHITE IDEOLOGY IN THIS COUNTRY-- MOST HUMANS TEND TO THINK OF THIS BATTLE AS CONTAINING JUST TWO PARTS. GOOD VERSUS EVIL. HEAVEN AND HELL. WHAT THEY REFUSE TO ACCEPT IS THAT EACH OF THOSE HAS SPLINTERED INTO A THOUSAND FACTIONS, EACH WITH ITS OWN AGENDA.

IN FACT IT'S NOW BECOME IMPOSSIBLE TO TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WHO IS WHO. THERE ARE DEMONS FIGHTING TO STOP EVIL AND THERE ARE ANGELS BENT ON CONQUERING EVEN GOD HIMSELF.

SO...

HOW WILL YOU BE ABLE TO TELL WHO'S FRIEND OR FOE DURING YOUR BATTLES?

SADLY, IT DOESN'T MATTER. BECAUSE EVERYTHING THAT EVERY HUMAN DOES IS CONTROLLED BY THEIR OWN PERSONAL ID.

THEY DELUDE THEMSELVES, THINKING SOME GREATER FORCE IS GUIDING THEM, BUT IT'S MERELY THEIR OWN SUBCONSCIOUS. THEIR OWN INNER NEEDS.

THAT HOLDS TRUE FOR YOU, TOO.

INSIDE THIS CASE IS EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR PAST LIFE...

HAND IT OVER.

QUIET! I'M NOT THROUGH!

LET ME TELL YOU WHAT I WANT!

I INTEND TO CONTROL YOU. YOU AND YOUR POWERS. BECAUSE TOGETHER WE CAN DEFEAT THOSE WHO MADE US WHAT WE'VE BECOME TODAY.

MONSTERS.

WE'VE BECOME MONSTERS.

AS LONG AS THE INFORMATION--CONTAINED WITHIN THIS CASE--REMAINS IN MY POSSESSION, YOU WILL BE MINE TO COMMAND. AND THE FIRST THING I NEED TO DO IS STRENGTHEN YOU.

WELCOME, MR. DOWNING, TO A LIFE OF SERVITUDE.

THOOK

HE'S GONE. MELTED INTO THE SHADOWS. YOU'LL LEARN THAT TOO.

WHERE'D HE GO?!

LET'S SEE...

HMMM... I THINK THERE'S SOMETHING IN MY EYE.

urk!

I THINK YOU'RE REALLY CHOKING PEOPLE UP OUT THERE. KEEP IT UP. THIS IS GOING GREAT.

DO YOU NEED SOMEONE TO GET YOU SOMETHING? A DRINK? SOME FOOD? THIS IS A SIX MINUTE BREAK WE HAVE.

NO, THANKS. I'M OKAY.

MISS PHILLIPS. WE'VE GOT NOTHING SO FAR. NOT A SINGLE PHONE CALL.

HOW'S THAT POSSIBLE, THAT NO ONE IN AMERICA HAS EVER SEEN THIS MAN? EVER?

THERE'S NO FAMILY...?

NO FRIENDS?

NO CO-WORKERS... *NOTHING?!* HOW THE HELL AM I SUPPOSE TO GET MY RATINGS? CHECK THE PHONES AGAIN!

SORRY ABOUT THE OUTBURST. WE'LL JUST HAVE TO GO TO PLAN 'B'.

UM... OKAY.

I'LL BE BACK IN A MINUTE.

YOU'RE DOING *AWESOME,* JIM! KEEP IT UP!

MARC-- WHAT THE HELL WAS SHE TALKING ABOUT JUST NOW?

THE PRODUCER SAID SHE CAN BE A BIT DIFFICULT AT TIMES. JUST GO WITH THE FLOW. LET HER DO HER THING. SO HOW'RE YOU FEELING?

I DON'T KNOW IF THIS WAS SUCH A GREAT IDEA.

YOU TOLD ME YOU NEEDED THE MONEY. THIS IS HOW WE GET IT.

YOU'RE THE ONE THAT SAID YOU DIDN'T WANT TO STAY AT MY APARTMENT TOO LONG.

I THOUGHT-- THAT SOME-ONE WOULD CALL IN. THAT I'D GET ONE ANSWER TODAY.

I'M SORRY, JIM. REALLY. THERE'S STILL A FEW MINUTES LEFT IN THE SHOW. SO WHO KNOWS?

HANG IN THERE.

I'LL TRY. WHAT ABOUT YOU? YOU LOOK LIKE CRAP.

DIDN'T SLEEP MUCH LAST NIGHT.

PLUS I'VE GOT THIS *KILLER* HEAD-ACHE. IT'S SCREWING UP MY VISION.

DIDN'T HELP THAT YOU ABOUT GAVE ME A HEART ATTACK THIS MORNING. YOU JUST ABOUT MISSED THE SHOW! WHY WERE YOU SO LATE ANYWAY?

I TOLD YOU. I RAN INTO SOMEONE.

HOW? YOU DON'T KNOW ANYONE!

NEVER MIND. WE'LL TALK ABOUT IT LATER.

NOW RELAX. AND DON'T LET HER AMBUSH YOU.

WELCOME BACK TO OUR FINAL SEGMENT.

IT'S BEEN A PLEASURE HAVING YOU TODAY, JIM. WE'RE SORRY NONE OF THE PHONE LINES RANG. WHAT WAS MEANT TO BE A SHOW THAT WOULD GIVE US ALL SOME ANSWERS ABOUT YOUR PAST HAS INSTEAD TURNED INTO AN EVEN BIGGER MYSTERY. NOT ONE CALL HAS COME IN ACROSS THE NATION.

Have you seen this man before? Please help us by calling
1-800-John Doe

SADLY, WE'LL HAVE TO LEAVE YOU AS YOU CAME. A HERO WITH NO PAST.

STILL--YOU HAVE YOUR 'GIFT.'

AND I'M SURE YOU WON'T MIND SHARING A MOMENT OF THAT WITH OUR NEXT TWO GUESTS.

I'D LIKE YOU TO MEET JEANNA WHITEHURST AND HER FIFTEEN YEAR OLD SON, ALEX. THEY CAME ALL THE WAY FROM BENTONVILLE, ARKANSAS.

THEY'VE DESPERATELY BEEN WAITING FOR A MIRACLE OF THEIR OWN FOR FIFTEEN YEARS.

YOU SEE, ALEX WAS BORN WITH A DISEASE SO RARE THAT MEDICAL BOOKS HAVE NO FORMAL RECORD OF ITS EXISTENCE. THE CLOSEST THING THEY COULD COMPARE IT TO WAS AMYOTROPHIC LATERAL SCLEROSIS, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS A.L.S. OR LOU GEHRIG'S DISEASE. BUT IN ALEX'S CASE, THE DISEASE DIDN'T EMERGE UNTIL LATER IN HIS LIFE TO ROB HIM OF HIS MOTOR SKILLS-- ALEX'S DISEASE WAS FULLY DEVELOPED AT BIRTH.

HE HAS BEEN UNABLE TO SPEAK OR MOVE SINCE HIS FIRST DAY. THE WHITEHURST FAMILY STAGED A VALIANT EFFORT TO COMBAT THIS TERRIBLY UNIQUE CASE. THEIR DOCTORS ABANDONED ANY HOPE LONG AGO. NOW, JEANNA, FIVE YEARS DIVORCED, TRIES TIRELESSLY TO GIVE SOME MEANING TO HER SON'S LIFE.

THE KARLENE PHILLIPS

WELCOME, JEANNA. THANKS FOR MAKING THE TRIP TO NEW YORK CITY.

THANKS FOR ASKING US, MISS PHILLIPS. IT'S AN HONOR.

TELL US, JEANNA, IF YOU COULD, WHY YOU DECIDED TO MAKE SUCH AN ARDUOUS TRIP HERE TODAY?

ALRIGHT. AND--PLEASE FORGIVE MY NERVOUSNESS, IF YOU WILL--I'M NOT USED TO THINGS LIKE THIS BACK HOME.

WE ONLY HAVE A FEW MINUTES LEFT. SO PLEASE, BRIEFLY, TELL US WHY YOU'RE HERE.

WELL, AS YOU'VE ALREADY MENTIONED, MY BOY HERE CAN'T MOVE OR TALK. NEVER HAS. DOCTORS SAY HE NEVER WILL. OTHER THAN GIVING HIM SOME INTRAVENOUS FLUIDS DURING THE DAY, THEY DON'T DO MUCH WITH HIM ANYMORE. THEY SAY IT'S HOPELESS.

I DON'T BELIEVE THAT!

MY BOY, IF YOU LOOK IN HIS EYES--HE'S ALIVE. VERY MUCH SO. SO, I'VE BEEN TEACHING HIM MATH AND READING. SCIENCE. ALL HIS SCHOOL SUBJECTS, HOPING ONE DAY BY THE GRACE OF GOD--HE'LL RELEASE MY SON FROM THIS TERRIBLE, HAUNTING DISEASE.

ON TOP OF THAT--I'M DESPERATE. THAT'S THE BEST I CAN SAY IT. I'M BROKE. SPENT ALL MY MONEY ON DOCTORS, NOW I CAN BARELY PAY TO KEEP THE HEAT ON FOR ALEX.

YOU CAN'T IMAGINE WHAT THAT DOES TO YOU. KNOWING YOU CAN'T HELP YOUR CHILD. KNOWING THAT YOU'VE FAILED HIM. FAILED YOUR MARRIAGE.

Have you seen this man before? Please help us by calling
1-800-John Doe

MY SON DOESN'T EVEN HAVE--COUGH--I'M SORRY. HE DOESN'T HAVE A FRIEND. THIS LITTLE BOY HAS SPENT HIS ENTIRE EXISTENCE WITHOUT A SINGLE FRIEND IN HIS LIFE. DO YOU KNOW HOW PAINFUL THAT IS TO ACCEPT? THAT I'M THE ONLY ONE IN HIS LIFE...?

BUT...

BUT I'M NOT GOING TO BE AROUND FOREVER. IN FACT, THE DOCTORS HAVE SAID MY LIVER HAS BEGUN TO FAIL ME.

SO WHY AM I HERE? I'M HERE ON THE SLIM HOPE THAT THIS MAN--WHOM I'VE NEVER MET--WHO ALREADY HAS MORE PROBLEMS THAN HE WOULD EVER WANT--MIGHT SOMEHOW HELP RESTORE THE FAITH I'VE LOST IN GOD.

LIKE YOU, MR. DOWNING, WE'RE LOST TOO. WITH NO ONE GIVING US ANY ANSWERS, EITHER.

SO--PLEASE--

I BEG YOU...

PLEASE SHARE IT WITH HIM...

YOUR KINDNESS.

Have you seen this man before? Please help us by calling
1-800-John Doe

Earlier.

KRAKK

THUK

KRAKK

THAT'S IT--

:spit:

THAT'S ALL YOU GOT?

NO. THERE'S MORE.

CHINK

ugh--!

YOUR BOSS--I WANT HIS NAME AND WHERE HE LIVES!

WHAT WAS IN IT?

:gurk:

HE DOESN'T LIVE! DON'T YOU GET THAT? NONE OF US DO! AND HE WASN'T HERE FOR YOU. HE CAME FOR THE CASE.

DIDN'T YOU HEAR HIM?! YOUR LIFE-- EVERYTHING ABOUT YOU--IS IN THERE!

BUT YOU AREN'T READY TO HAVE THOSE ANSWERS. YOU'RE NOT STRONG ENOUGH YET! THAT'S WHY THE MASTER TOOK IT. YOU'RE NOT PREPARED YET!

SO STOP THINKING YOU CAN HURT US!

HIS NAME. I WANT A NAME.

NOW...

TALK!

guh.

COUGH

COUGH

THE BOSS-- HE KNOWS EVERYTHING! ABOUT EVERYONE!

EXCEPT YOU!

YOU'RE DIFFERENT FROM THE REST OF US. SO THE CASE--

COUGH --

THEY SAID IT HAD FILES.

PHOTOS.

DATES.

EVERY-THING ABOUT YOU!

SO-- YOU WANT A NAME--THEN YOU'LL HAVE TO KILL ME THE RIGHT WAY! GORING ME--THAT WON'T KILL ME! ANY MORE THAN THIS WILL KILL YOU...!

BLAM

YOU NEED MY HEAD. CUT IT OFF! IT'LL MAKE YOU STRONGER! AND THE BOSS WANTS YOU STRONG!

WHAT'S HIS NAME?!

I WROTE IT DOWN--THEN SWALLOWED IT!

ONLY ONE WAY TO GET IT NOW.

COME ON! YOU CAN DO IT-- FOR SARA'S SAKE.

WHAT'D YOU SAY?

THAT'S RIGHT, WE KNOW WHERE SHE LIVES. HE'LL SEND OTHERS TO PAY HER A 'VISIT.'

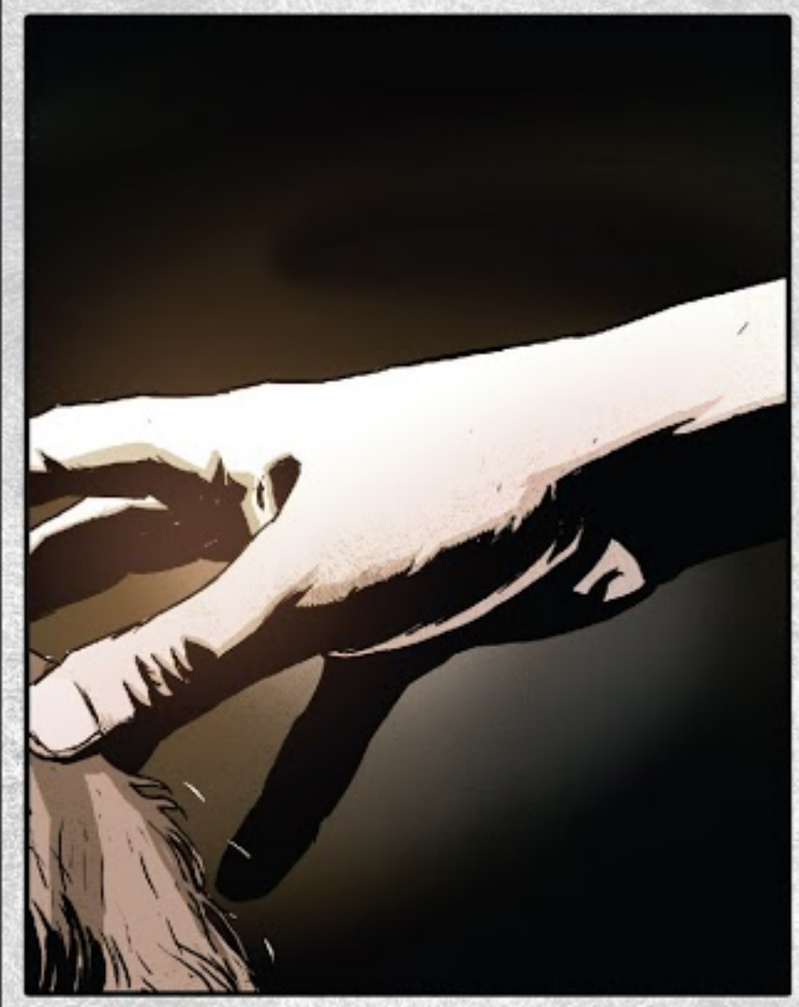
SO RIP MY HEAD OFF.

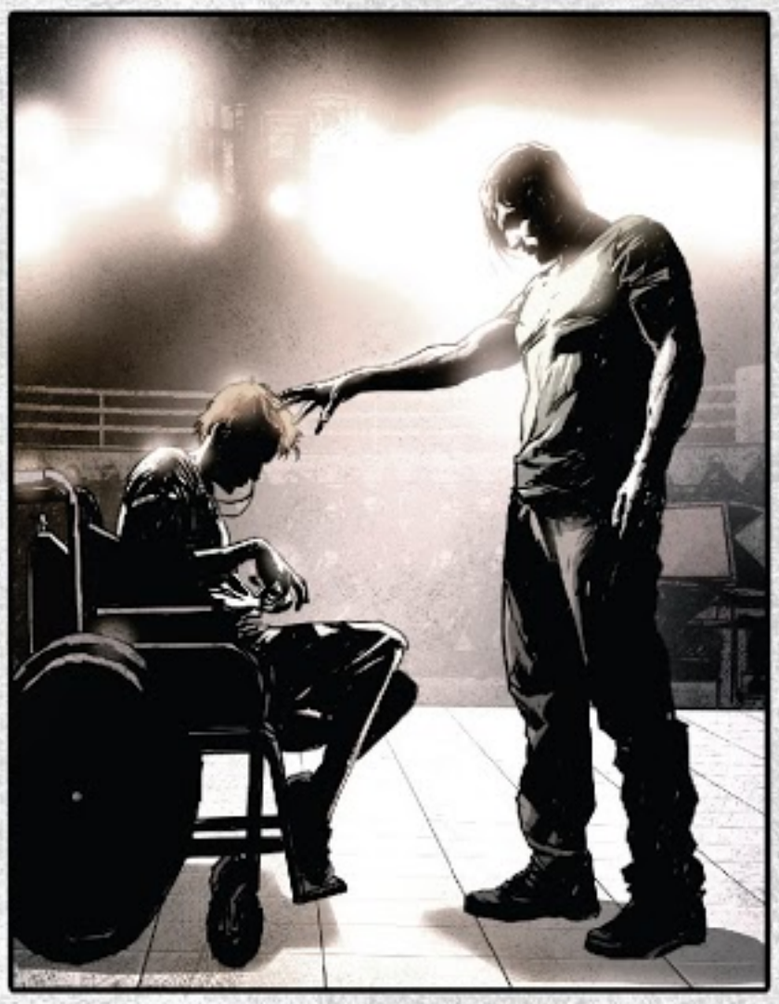
I'M DONE TALKING. IT'S YOUR MOVE.

KSHSSKRKKK

SSSSKKOFF

HIS NAME IS BLUDD.
OUR VAMPIRE LORD





momma...?

Later that night.

CHRIST! NOT AGAIN.

SOME-THING WRONG?

NO. I'VE JUST HAD A HEADACHE ALL DAY. I THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO PASS OUT DURING JIM'S INTERVIEW.

MY GLASSES MAKE IT WORSE. IT'S ALMOST LIKE...

...LIKE I DON'T...

OH MY GOD!! HE DID IT AGAIN!

WHAT IS IT...?!

ALL THOSE TIMES I TOUCHED HIM. I NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT IT--BUT HE DID IT TO ME!

WHAT?

HE FIXED MY EYES...

I DON'T NEED GLASSES ANY-MORE!

image

202

DIGITAL EDITION

SPAWN®

CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP
CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP
CLAP CLAP CLAP

...YOU'VE WITNESSED A TRUE MIRACLE, LADIES AND GENTLE-MEN.

SOME WILL, NO DOUBT, SCOFF AT TODAY'S SHOW. BUT WHAT YOU SAW WAS REAL.

KARLENE PHILLIPS

UNFORTUNATELY, WE'RE ALL OUT OF TIME--*SEE YOU TOMORROW!*

AND WE'RE CLEAR.

MR. DOWNING!

MR. DOWNING--!

MY MOTHER'S SICK--HOW DO WE CONTACT YOU...

TOUCH ME!

LET ME SHAKE YOUR HAND!

GET BACK-- *EVERYONE*-- GIVE HIM ROOM!

Backstage.

MY *GOD!*

YOU *HEAR THAT?* YOU'RE A *STAR!* LISTEN TO THEM-- THEY LOVE YOU, MAN!

BUT WE SHOULD GET YOU TO THE 'GREEN ROOM'. IT WON'T BE SAFE BACK HERE.

OKAY.

AND, MARC-- THANKS.

DUDE! IT WAS FANTASTIC! YOU SHOULD'VE SEEN THE CROWD. I THOUGHT THERE WAS GOING TO BE A *FRIGGIN' RIOT!* AND THE MOM--*WOW!*--SHE COULDN'T STOP CRYING.

REAL?!! HELL YEAH IT'S REAL!

YOU THINK I'D PULL YOUR CHAIN LIKE THAT?

I SAID THIS WAS GOING TO BE *BIG!* BUT I'M TELLING YOU IT WAS EVEN BETTER THAN I'D HOPED. AND *JIM*--HE WAS LIKE A PRO!--JUST SAT THERE ALL QUIET. TAKING HIS TIME. THEN *BOOM!* HE TOUCHES THE KID. IT WAS DEAD SILENT!

NO ONE KNEW WHAT WAS HAPPENING... *HELL,* I DIDN'T!

AND THE CHICKS--WHOA--HE HAD 'EM ALL WEEPING AND SOBBING. THAT'S WHY THEY...

BZZZZT

I'VE GOT TO TAKE THIS. CALL YOU LATER.

SORRY, I DIDN'T CATCH YOUR NAME. IT'S MANNY WHAT?

MANNY BREWER. AND YOU SAY YOU WORK FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES? HANG ON A SEC, PLEASE.

JIM! DUDE'S FROM THE TIMES! THEY WANT TO DO SOMETHING WITH YOU.

I'M SORRY. WHAT DAY DID YOU WANT TO DO THAT AGAIN? I'LL LOOK AT HIS SCHEDULE AND GET BACK TO YOU.

BY TOMORROW AT THE LATEST. 'BYE.

NO WAY!

47 NEW

LOOK AT THIS, JIM. FORTY-SEVEN TEXTS!

KNOCK KNOCK

EXCUSE ME, MR. DOWNING, I'M THE STUDIO'S LEAD EXECUTIVE. I WANT TO THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME TODAY.

IT WAS MY PLEASURE. THANKS FOR HAVING ME.

I WANTED TO BRING YOU YOUR PAYMENT. I ASKED THEM TO PROVIDE CASH. DIDN'T THINK YOU'D HAVE A BANK ACCOUNT--GIVEN YOUR SITUATION.

AND HERE'S MY CARD...

I'D LIKE TO TALK ABOUT HAVING YOU MAKE ANOTHER APPEARANCE. ALSO, IT MIGHT BE WORTH OUR TIME TO TALK ABOUT YOUR OWN SHOW. WE HAVE A COUPLE SLOTS OPENING AND, WELL...

JUST THINK ABOUT IT. THINGS ARE PRETTY CRAZY RIGHT NOW, SO I'LL LET YOU CATCH YOUR BREATH--MY OFFICE WILL CONTACT YOU TOMORROW.

BUT BEFORE I GO, I'D LIKE TO SAY...WHAT YOU DID FOR THAT BOY... WELL, YOU SHOULD BE PROUD OF YOURSELF.*

*Last issue--Todd.

I APPRECIATE THAT.

OH.

MY.

GOD!

DO YOU KNOW WHO *THAT WAS?* DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA?!

HE'S ONLY THE ***BIGGEST*** TV EXEC IN THE CITY! OWNS HALF THE SHOWS AROUND HERE--AND HE GAVE OPRAH HER FIRST HUGE BREAK!

THAT GUY PRACTICALLY CREATED MOST OF...

JIM...?

JIM? YOU LISTENING?

twitch...?

I'M HERE, SAM.

how long have i been sleeping?

NINE OR TEN HOURS. DOCTORS HAD YOU PRETTY MEDICATED.

SAID THEY NEEDED TO STABILIZE YOU BEFORE THEY COULD RUN MORE TESTS.

HOW YOU FEELING ANYWAY?

great.

GOOD. NOW I WANT THE TRUTH.

the pain...

it's--i don't know what's happening, but i--i'm not going to make it, twitch. the pain's too incredible.

and it's getting worse.

DON'T TALK LIKE THAT.

WE'VE BEEN THROUGH WORSE THAN THIS.

not this time. something's different.

something doesn't feel right. i should have listened to you--nagging me about my eating habits.

SAM...

THIS ISN'T YOUR FAULT. YOU HEAR ME? IT'S MINE. I DID THIS TO YOU-- THIS HAS *NOTHING* TO DO WITH YOUR DIET.

I-- SOMETHING WEIRD HAPPENED NEAR THAT BUILDING COLLAPSE. SO I NEED YOU TO HANG IN THERE 'TIL I FIGURE OUT HOW TO UNDO THIS.*

*Issue 199--Todd

NOW YOU GET SOME REST. I'LL BE RIGHT OUTSIDE.

HOW'S HE DOING?

NOT GOOD.

HE SAYS IT'S GETTING WORSE, THAT SOMETHING'S SERIOUSLY WRONG WITH HIM.

BUT HE'S GOING TO MAKE IT, RIGHT?

DON'T KNOW.

I NEED TO TALK TO A DOCTOR. SEE HOW MUCH TIME I HAVE TO FIGURE THIS OUT.

CAN I HELP?

I'M BANKING ON IT.

I SAW SOMETHING-- IN THE ALLEYS-- IT TOLD ME THIS WOULD HAPPEN. SOMETHING... SUPER-NATURAL.

THINK YOU CAN HANDLE THAT?

BECAUSE I CAN'T DO THIS ON MY OWN.

LET ME TELL YOU WHAT SAM DIDN'T WANT TO LISTEN TO. THE REASON I'M HERE IN THE FIRST PLACE IS BECAUSE MESSED UP STUFF WAS HAPPENING AT MY END TOO. I'M TALKING ABOUT SHIT YOU NEVER HEAR ABOUT IN VIRGINIA.

ALL *THIS STUFF*--THE MURDERS, THE ATTACKS, THE SUICIDES-- EVERY INSTINCT I'VE GOT SAYS IT'S SOMEHOW CONNECTED.

AND THAT GUY THEY KEEP TALKING ABOUT ON TV... HE'S A PIECE OF THIS PUZZLE, TOO.

JIM DOWNING

SO, *HELL YEAH* I'M IN!

EXCUSE ME, DR. RIVERS, COULD I BOTHER YOU FOR A MOMENT?

I WAS JUST SPEAKING WITH MR. BURKE--YOUR PATIENT IN ROOM 2104--AND HE TOLD ME HIS SYMPTOMS ARE SOMEHOW GETTING WORSE. THAT THE PAIN KEEPS BUILDING. AND I HAVE TO TELL YOU--SAM'S THE STRONGEST, MOST STUBBORN MAN I'VE EVER MET--BUT HE'S TALKING LIKE HE'S NOT GOING TO LIVE THROUGH THIS.

SO, HOW ALARMED SHOULD I BE? AND WHAT KIND OF A TIMEFRAME ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

THEY RAN A NEW SET OF TESTS A FEW HOURS AGO. I'M HOPING THE RESULTS GIVE US SOME BETTER NEWS. RIGHT NOW, THOUGH, WE HAVEN'T FOUND THE ANSWERS WE'RE LOOKING FOR. AS MUCH AS WE TRY, WE HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO STABILIZE HIS CONDITION.

IT APPEARS THAT SOME OF HIS ORGANS HAVE SLOWLY BEGUN TO SHUT DOWN. THERE'S ABOUT A TWO WEEK WINDOW WE HAVE TO SOLVE THIS. THEN HIS ODDS FOR SURVIVAL GET VERY SMALL.

IN THE MEANTIME, THE STAFF'S MAKING EXTRA EFFORTS TO KEEP HIM COMFORTABLE.

"ALL THE DOCTORS AND NURSES ARE DOING THE BEST THEY CAN.

"AND WE'RE GIVING HIM 100 C.C.'S OF MORPHINE TO FIGHT THE PAIN."

800
700
600
500
400
300
200
100
50

WE WARNED YOUR PARTNER.

NOW YOU'LL PAY THE PRICE FOR HIS MISTAKE.

I DON'T NEED *GLASSES* ANY-MORE!*

*See last issue--Todd

YOU'RE KIDDING! HOW'S THAT POSSIBLE?

IT'S JIM. I KEEP TELLING YOU WHAT HE CAN DO. I MEAN LOOK AT THE EMAILS I'M GETTING! EVERY-ONE WANTS A PIECE OF HIM.

IS--IS THAT ONE FROM THE OPRAH SHOW?!

YEP. OUR LIVES ARE ABOUT TO GET CRAZY.

WELL, BEFORE THAT HAPPENS, MAYBE YOU AND I NEED A LITTLE NAKED TIME TO-GETHER.

NOW?

I'M WORKING. I NEED TO SORT THROUGH ALL THESE REQUESTS.

IF I DON'T CONFIRM A FEW OF THESE THEY'LL PULL THEIR OFFERS. AND SOME ARE PRETTY *BIG.* EVEN HAVE A SPONSORSHIP OFFER.

I GUESS I'LL JUST NEED TO DISTRACT YOU THEN.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT *THIS* OFFER?

IMPRESSIVE.

BUT C'MON, SUSAN. GIVE ME A COUPLE OF HOURS AND I'LL BE ALL YOURS.

REALLY? YOU'RE TURNING THIS DOWN?

DON'T GET MAD.

FORGET IT! DO WHAT YOU WANT! I'LL JUST WATCH SOME TV *INSTEAD!*

IT WAS--I DON'T KNOW-- KIND OF WEIRD BECAUSE I DIDN'T THINK I'D ENJOY BEING IN FRONT OF SO MANY PEOPLE.

BUT I HAVE TO TELL YOU, IT WAS A BIT OF A RUSH. HOPE THAT DOESN'T SOUND TOO EGOTISTICAL? ESPECIALLY WITH THE WAY I'VE TREATED YOU LATELY. I HOPE YOU'LL FORGIVE ME.

SARA?

SARA, YOU STILL THERE?

SORRY. I'M STILL OVERWHELMED ABOUT WHAT YOU DID TODAY. AND OF COURSE I FORGIVE YOU.

I'M JUST BUMMED THAT NO ONE CALLED INTO THE SHOW WHO KNEW YOU. BUT THE 'MIRACLE' YOU PERFORMED FOR THAT BOY, IT... I CRIED. IT WAS SO INCREDIBLE.

THANKS.

GOD TOLD ME YOU WERE SPECIAL. BUT THIS...

I KNOW. CRAZY, unh?

BUT-- um, IT'S GETTING LATE-- I'LL LET YOU GO. THANKS FOR TALKING. IT'S BEEN TOUGH ON ME, FEELING LIKE I WAS ALL ALONE. SLEEP WELL.

TEK

JIM?

I'LL MAKE YOU FEEL WANTED.

The next day.

YOU'RE IN A GOOD MOOD THIS MORNING. STARTING TO ENJOY YOUR NEW FOUND CELEBRITY STATUS?

OH, BY THE WAY, I NEED TO THANK YOU FOR LAST NIGHT. SUSAN SAID YOU AND SHE HAD A GOOD TALK WHILE I WAS WORKING. SHE WAS IN A PRETTY PISSY MOOD--BUT SAID YOU MADE HER FEEL A LOT BETTER.

YOU COULD SAY THAT.

SO WHERE WE GOING, AGAIN?

I'LL EXPLAIN IN THE CAB. I NEED YOU TO GET READY, THOUGH.

FOR WHAT?

FOR THIS.

DON'T SAY ANYTHING-- JUST KEEP MOVING. THERE'S A CAB WAITING OUTSIDE.

ALL RIGHT, EVERYONE-- THAT'S ENOUGH FOR ONE DAY!

WE'RE LATE FOR A MEETING. SO CLEAR A PATH-- PLEASE!

I HOPE THIS IS OKAY, WHAT I'M DOING FOR YOU. I KNOW YOU DIDN'T ASK ME, BUT YOU WERE GOING TO NEED A MANAGER ANYWAY. AND WITH ME LOSING MY JOB I THOUGHT, MAYBE...

I COULD GET A SMALL PERCENTAGE OF YOUR FEES.

SURE.

IT'D REALLY MAKE ME LOOK GOOD TO SUSAN.

LAST NIGHT SHE TOLD ME YOU COULD STAY FOR AS LONG AS YOU WANTED. SAID SHE LIKES HAVING THE COMPANY.

...AND YOU TELL THEM THAT IF THE DEAL DOESN'T CLOSE BY NEXT MONTH, I'LL UP MY STAKE IN THEIR STOCK AND VOTE IN A NEW BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

I'M GETTING TIRED OF THEIR PETTY POLITICS.

THIS IS GOOD FOR *BOTH* OF US. MAKE THEM UNDERSTAND THAT!

5 E

MetLife

WELCOME HOME, MR. RAMUS.

WE HOPE YOU HAD A PLEASANT TRIP OVERSEAS. THE NEWSPAPERS WERE VERY FLATTERING IN THEIR COVERAGE OF YOUR MEETINGS. THEY SAID THE NEW MERGER WOULD BE GOOD FOR NEW JOB CREATION. OUR CONTACTS FROM CAPITOL HILL ALSO SENT THEIR APPROVAL.

YOUR NEXT MEETING STARTS IN TWENTY MINUTES. I'LL HAVE THE GENTLEMEN IN YOUR OFFICE SHORTLY.

SO WHAT DO YOU THINK?

THEY OCCUPY THIS WHOLE BUILDING.

NOT TOO SHABBY.

THAT STATUE'S A BIT MELODRAMATIC THOUGH, WOULDN'T YOU SAY?

NOT REALLY. A BUNCH OF THESE MULTI-NATIONAL CORPORATIONS LIKE TO HAVE UNIQUE ARCHITECTURE. IT'S GOOD FOR BRANDING THEIR NAMES.

NICE HOW YOU'RE IGNORING THE PAPARAZZI. YOU'RE GETTING PRETTY GOOD AT THIS.

MR. DOWNING?

I'M WITH SECURITY. YOU AND YOUR ASSISTANT CAN FOLLOW ME.

HE'S NOT MY ASSISTANT. HE'S MY-- MANAGER.

uh ... LIKE HE SAID, I'M HIS MANAGER. HERE'S MY CREDENTIALS. WE HAVE AN APPOINTMENT WITH MR. RAMUS HIMSELF.

YES. HE'S BEEN EXPECTING YOU.

WHAT DID YOU SAY THIS COMPANY DOES?

LOTS OF THINGS. DEFENSE CONTRACTING. INTERNATIONAL SECURITY. HUMANITARIAN BRANCHES IN FIVE OR SIX COUNTRIES. PLUS, THEY OWN A BUNCH OF FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES.

HOW DO YOU THINK HE AFFORDS ALL THE ARTIFACTS IN HERE?

I MEAN, LOOK AT THIS STUFF. THERE'S SOME HISTORICAL PIECES HERE.

ANYWAY, THEY CALLED AND WANTED TO TALK WITH YOU ABOUT BEING A SPOKESMAN FOR ONE OF THEIR DIVISIONS. DIDN'T SAY WHICH ONE, BUT THEY'RE ALL HIGH PROFILE.

YOU MUST'VE HEARD ABOUT THE ***RAMUS CORPORATION*** BEFORE YOUR COMA. THEY'RE IN THE NEWS ALL THE TIME. IF WE CAN NAIL THIS DEAL IT'LL SET YOU UP FOR...

JESUS!

CRASH

YOU THINK THAT WAS EXPENSIVE?

GENTLE-MEN...

...THANK YOU FOR COMING ON SUCH SHORT NOTICE. I HOPE WE DIDN'T INCONVE-NIENCE EITHER OF YOU.

NO. NO-- WE'RE HAPPY TO BE HERE.

I'M MARC, AND THIS IS JIM DOWNING.

HELLO, MR. RAMUS, IT'S...

LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!

WHAT?!

WE JUST GOT HERE!

I KNOW THAT GUY! HE CAN'T BE TRUSTED!

HOW DO YOU KNOW RAMUS?

HE'S RIGHT, MR. DOWNING. YOU MUST HAVE ME CONFUSED WITH SOME-ONE ELSE. BUT MAYBE IT MIGHT BE BETTER IF WE WERE TO SPEAK ALONE. MARC, WOULD YOU MIND GIVING US A FEW MINUTES? I'D LIKE TO DISCUSS SOME THINGS WITH MR. DOWNING PRIVATELY.

OKAY.

I'LL WAIT OUTSIDE. GIVE ME A SHOUT IF YOU NEED ANYTHING, JIM.

THE CASE. WHERE IS IT?*

*See last issue--Todd

ALL IN DUE TIME, MR. DOWNING.

ALL IN DUE TIME.

YOUR TRANSFORMATIONS SEEM TO BE COMING MUCH EASIER. EXCELLENT! THAT MEANS YOU'RE BEGINNING TO ACCEPT WHAT YOU'VE BECOME. THE MORE TIMES YOU USE THE POWER-- THE MORE ADDICTED YOU BECOME TO IT.

SHUT UP!

gurk!

WHAT NOW? YOU'RE GOING TO KILL ME? I DON'T THINK SO.

LOOK, UP THERE!!
ANYTHING YOU DO WILL BE CAPTURED ON SECURITY CAMERAS. COMBINE THAT WITH THE FACT I HAD THE MEDIA WAITING IN MY LOBBY. THEY KNOW YOU'RE HERE. THINK HOW TRAGIC IT'D BE FOR PEOPLE TO FIND OUT THEIR NEW SAVIOR IS ALSO A MURDERER.

BESIDES-- YOU LIKE THE ***FAME*** THEY'RE GIVING YOU--DON'T YOU? I SAW IT IN YOUR EYES. YOU'RE BECOMING ADDICTED TO THAT TOO.

NEW YORK'S EMERGENCY RESPONSE OFFICIALS HAVE YET TO RELEASE A STATEMENT REGARDING LAST WEEK'S UNEXPECTED BUILDING COLLAPSE IN GREENWICH VILLAGE. SOURCES CLOSE TO THE SCENE HAVE CONFIRMED THAT THE ALLEGED PERPETRATOR, A MYSTERIOUS SUPER-BEING, WAS STILL ALIVE AS HE WAS EXTRACTED FROM THE SITE, WHICH WAS THOROUGHLY DEMOLISHED DURING THE ATTACK. TONS OF RUBBLE SEPARATED THIS ENHANCED-ABILITY SURVIVOR FROM HIS EVENTUAL RESCUERS.

FEMA, THE FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY, IS ON HAND, BUT ARE WITHHOLDING COMMENT PENDING A FULL INVESTIGATION.

CONFLICTING STORIES, SUBSTANTIATED TO VARYING DEGREES BY EYEWITNESSES, HAVE PINPOINTED A SINGLE INDIVIDUAL AS THE TARGET OF THE ATTACK. WE ARE UNABLE TO CONFIRM HIS IDENTITY.

AS SOME OF OUR VIEWERS MAY BE AWARE, ***JIM DOWNING,*** THE APPARENT TARGET OF THAT GREENWICH VILLAGE ***STRUCTURAL FAILURE,*** WAS RECENTLY A GUEST ON KARLENE PHILLIPS' MORNING SHOW. HIS APPEARANCE CAME JUST DAYS AFTER THE ATTACK, AND HE ***HIMSELF*** SEEMED NONE THE WORSE FOR THE EXPERIENCE, THOUGH HIS ***WARDROBE*** HAD YET TO RECOVER. PRIOR TO THE SHOW, THE USUAL UNVERIFIED SOURCES TIED HIM TO THE ***"MIRACULOUS"*** RECOVERIES OF OVER A DOZEN OF HIS FELLOW PATIENTS IN THE FORMER HOSPITAL, PATIENTS SUFFERING A ***WIDE RANGE*** OF UNRELATED ILLNESSES. OUR MR. DOWNING IS ***NOTHING*** IF NOT ***AMBITIOUS!***

MS. PHILLIPS WAS THE ***FIRST*** NETWORK TALKER TO INTERVIEW HIM, AND HER NEW YORK-BASED SHOW CENTERED MOSTLY ON THESE ***RUMORED ABILITIES.*** THE CLIMAX OF THE SHOW CAUSED ***QUITE*** A STIR, AND LED CRITICS TO QUESTION THE ***VALIDITY*** OF THE PRESENTATION.

A TROUBLED NATION OF VIEWERS NO DOUBT SITS READY TO SEE SOME SMALL MIRACLES OF THEIR OWN. NO TIME LIKE THE ***PRESENT,*** MR. DOWNING!

WHAT A CROCK!! AND THAT'S PUTTING IT ***MILDLY!***

KARLENE PHILLIPS HAS BEEN PREDICTABLY ***SHAMELESS*** IN HER DRIVE TO SPIKE HER RATINGS, AND HER ***DOZENS*** OF VIEWERS HAVE BEEN TREATED TO COUNTLESS ***FREAKS*** AND ***JACKWAGONS*** DURING HER MANY DECADES ON THE AIR. ADVANCING AGE HAS ***NOT*** BLINDED HER, THOUGH, TO THE POSSIBILITIES IN A MAN WITH ***NO PAST LIFE*** THAT ANYONE CAN TELL US ABOUT... ***INCLUDING HIS DOCTORS!!...*** WHO SUDDENLY WAKES FROM A TWO-DECADE COMA. OF ***COURSE*** SHE HAILS HIM WITH A "COME TO JESUS" SESSION! HER NURSING HOME DEMOGRAPHIC HAS WAITED ***YEARS*** FOR A MIRACLE MAN TO MEND THINGS THEIR DOCTORS CAN'T FIX! THE ***HIPPIE LIBERAL BLOGGERS,*** MEANWHILE, ARE ***ALREADY*** ANOINTING HIM AS THE ***SECOND COMING.*** IF HE'S SO ***HOT,*** HOW 'BOUT HE DOES SOMETHING WITH THE LOUSY ***JOB RECOVERY*** STATS?

NEXT TIME HE'S ON KARLENE'S SHOW YOU CAN ***BET*** HE'S GOING TO ASK FOR ***DONATIONS*** TO PAY HIS ***RENT!*** HEY, ***FAITH HEALER!*** GET A ***JOB!*** MAKE A ***REAL*** MIRACLE AND GIVE ***EVERYONE*** A JOB!

GO ON! *KILL ME!* RIGHT HERE-- RIGHT NOW! GIVE IN TO YOUR *DESIRES!*

YOU FEEL IT, DON'T YOU? THE *BLOOD LUST* WELLING UP INSIDE YOU-- CRAVING TO BE RELEASED! THAT'S BECAUSE YOUR COSTUME KNOWS THAT WITH EVERY DEATH BY YOUR HANDS, *IT* BECOMES STRONGER.

THAT'S RIGHT...YOUR SUIT! IT'S ALIVE AND IT *THINKS!* IT UNDERSTANDS WHAT YOU'RE MEANT TO BE.

THAT YOU'RE *MORE* VAMPIRE THAN I'LL EVER BE!

NO!

KRSH

CRAK

CHKK

um...EXCUSE ME... YOU HEARING WHAT I'M HEARING?

SHOULDN'T WE...

I DON'T HEAR A THING.

this is nuts.

THINK ABOUT IT-- WHAT TIME HAS IT BEEN DURING EACH TRANS-FORMATION INTO SPAWN?

NIGHTFALL. *EVERY TIME* IT'S BEEN NIGHTFALL!

BUT I SEE YOU'RE STILL SKEPTICAL...

THEN LET ME PROVE MY POINT.

SISHH

LIKE ME-- YOU HAVE A LOW TOLERANCE FOR ***DIRECT SUNLIGHT.*** IT WON'T KILL US--MUCH AS THE HUMANS LIKE TO WRITE ABOUT THAT--BUT IT DOES MAKE US ***WEAKER.***

IT HURTS, DOESN'T IT?

OUR BREATHING BECOMES CONSTRICTED. OUR VEINS TIGHTEN. THEN WE LOSE OUR BALANCE BEFORE COLLAPSING TO THE GROUND.

THUD

AND BEFORE YOU TRY DENYING IT AGAIN...

YOUR VAMPIRE BLOOD LUST HAS ALREADY BEGUN. HASN'T IT?

THWAP

NEW YORK CLARION

MIDTOWN MURDER

THOUGH YOU DON'T CARE ABOUT ANY OF THIS, DO YOU? ALL YOU'RE REALLY AFTER IS YOUR PAST IDENTITY--AND THE BRIEFCASE I TOOK CONTAINED WHAT YOU'RE SO DESPERATELY LOOKING FOR.

WHICH IS WHY YOU'LL CONTINUE TO SERVE ME.

SO--YOU WANT THE CASE? *TAKE IT!*

BUT THERE'S A CATCH.

I'VE EMPTIED THE CASE'S CONTENTS EXCEPT FOR ONE CLUE TO YOUR PAST. IF YOU CONTINUE TO BEHAVE YOURSELF, I WILL--FROM TIME TO TIME--GIVE YOU ANOTHER PIECE OF YOUR PAST. AND SLOWLY YOU'LL DISCOVER WHO YOU REALLY ARE.

OR SHOULD I SAY... WERE.

NOW *GET UP!* AND GET THE HELL OUT OF MY SIGHT. YOU'RE MAKING ME SICK!

SLAM

JIM?

WAIT... *JIM!?*

DID YOU GET THE DEAL? DID HE OFFER YOU A CONTRACT OR WHAT? AND WHAT THE HECK WAS ALL THAT BANGING INSIDE?

YOU DIDN'T BREAK SOME MORE OF HIS STUFF, DID YOU?

I GOT WHAT I CAME FOR. WE DON'T NEED TO DISCUSS THIS ANYMORE.

BUT THERE IS SOMETHING YOU CAN DO FOR ME. I NEED YOU TO BOOK ME ON MORE SHOWS OR GET ME MORE INTERVIEWS--SO I CAN STOCKPILE SOME MONEY TO GET MY OWN APARTMENT, WHERE I CAN BE BY MYSELF.

IF I'M GOING TO EXPOSE MYSELF TO THE PUBLIC I'M GOING TO NEED THE TIME TO DO THINGS ON MY OWN.

SO...

HOW MUCH DID YOU SEE?

ALL OF IT. I WAS IN THE ROOM THE WHOLE TIME.

YOU THINK HE'LL COME AROUND? I'D HATE TO HAVE TO DESTROY HIM, GIVEN ALL HIS POTENTIAL.

I STILL THINK IT'S FIFTY-FIFTY, WHICH IS WHY I'M TRYING NOT TO PUSH TOO FAST. DON'T NEED HIM GETTING SUSPICIOUS.

SEEMS TO BE WORKING SO FAR.

GOTTA GIVE YOU CREDIT, THOUGH-- THAT CURTAIN TRICK--*VERY* EFFECTIVE! YOU'RE QUITE THE SHOWMAN.

WHAT'S YOUR READ ON HIM?

I FELT IT--HIS POWER. IT'S STRONGER THAN WE THOUGHT. AND WHEN THE COSTUME FINALLY TAKES CONTROL OF HIM, WE'RE ALL IN TROUBLE. THERE WON'T BE ANY STOPPING IT.

WHICH MAKES YOUR PLAN OF CONTROLLING THE SPAWN NOW-- MUCH MORE URGENT.

HE'S THE CATALYST THAT WE'VE BOTH BEEN LOOKING FOR. WHICH IS WHY I NEEDED TO GIVE HIM A REASON...

"...TO COME BACK TO US."

TAP TAP

WANTED TO WISH YOU A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP.

THANKS. YOU, TOO.

KLIK

I'M MARRIED?

PAGE FROM SPAWN 200:

*SEE ISSUE 185 --Todd

PAGE FROM SPAWN 185:

image

203

DIGITAL EDITION

SPAWN®

NO WAY.

Because of your choices, Mr. Downing, we've been watching you. Each day, you've been under constant scrutiny.

By now, you've become a prisoner of your own delusion. Although you might think you've traveled to this abyss on your own, you're mistaken. Your family suggested each of your decisions along the way, but because of your curiosities, we felt it was necessary to send a clear message. We have your wife, and if you wish to ever see her again, you'll follow our next set of instructions carefully. They'll be delivered when we deemed appropriate.

You will not go to the authorities. Foolish law enforcement is no match for what you're up against. Don't underestimate what we can do to her, Mr. Downing. She's not guaranteed safety.

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sage. We have your wife, and if you
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wife

WHO'S DOING THIS TO ME?

KNOCK KNOCK

SUSAN?

HEY, JIM...

WANTED YOU TO KNOW--MARC'S GOING OUT THIS EVENING, MEANING WE'LL BE *ALL* ALONE TONIGHT.

I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO IT. WHAT ABOUT YOU?

I DON'T THINK SO. THIS ISN'T GOING TO HAPPEN. NOT TONIGHT.

I JUST NEED TO BE ALONE.

YOU SURE? I CAN CHECK BACK LATER.

I'M SURE. NOW PLEASE-- JUST GO.

KNOCK KNOCK

GOD DAMN, SUSAN...

I *SAID* WE'RE ***NOT*** DOING THIS *AGAIN!!*

unh?

DOING WHAT?!

NOTHING. NEVERMIND.

WHAT'DYA WANT?

IT'S SARA-- SHE'S ON THE PHONE. SHE SOUNDS TERRIBLE.

HEY, SARA-- SOMETHING WRONG?

WHOA! EASY NOW--JUST SLOW DOWN! TAKE A DEEP BREATH AND TELL ME WHAT'S GOING ON.

WHAT?!

WHEN DID IT START? LOOK, FORGET IT... JUST TELL ME WHERE YOU'RE AT.

IT'S--LET ME THINK--ON SEVENTEENTH AND BROADWAY. THE EAST SIDE OF THE STREET. THAT LITTLE DELI PLACE CALLED LEONARDO'S. YOU AND I ATE HERE ONCE. REMEMBER?

THAT'S THE ONE. HURRY... PLEASE! I DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY'LL DO. THEY KEEP YELLING THAT I'M YOUR GIRLFRIEND OR SOMETHING. WANT TO KNOW WHERE YOU'RE AT--OR IF I KNOW HOW YOUR POWERS WORK. I MEAN *ANYTHING! THEY JUST WANT ANYTHING!*

AND THEY KEEP SHOWING UP! THERE WERE ONLY A COUPLE, WHEN THEY STARTED FOLLOWING ME-- I DON'T KNOW HOW MANY THERE ARE NOW--MAYBE A DOZEN OR TWO AND THEY KEEP BANGING ON THE WINDOW AND FLASHING THEIR CAMERAS! THEY'RE LIKE BLOODHOUNDS JUST TAKING PICTURES!

I'M AFRAID, JIM! I DON'T KNOW... I'VE-- I'VE NEVER BEEN THROUGH ANY-THING LIKE THIS. WHAT SHOULD I DO? HOW DO I MAKE THEM GO AWAY?

STAY WHERE YOU'RE AT! DON'T MOVE!

I'LL BE THERE AS FAST AS I CAN!

WHAT'S WRONG? SHE OKAY?

YOU WANT TO HELP? USE YOUR REPORTER SKILLS AND FIND THIS WOMAN!

WHO IS SHE?

MY WIFE!

Minsk, Belarus.

САНАТОРИЙ

<VICTOR, WAKE UP.>*

<I'M HERE.>

<unh?>

*Translated from Russian.

<THE TIME HAS COME. DO YOU STILL RECOGNIZE ME?>

<MASTER...?>

‹YES.›

‹YOUR SHELL IT'S SO--IT'S **DIFFERENT.**›

‹SAY MY NAME.›

‹MALEBOLGIA...›

‹SAVIOR OF THE DARK.›

‹YOU KNOW WHY I'M HERE.›

‹YOU... YOU WANT ***IT*** BACK.›

‹I DO.›

‹I'M NOT READY, MASTER... NOT YET. I BEG YOU... LET ME KEEP IT-- JUST A WHILE LONGER.›

‹PLEASE... I STILL NEED ITS EMBRACE.›

‹IT WASN'T YOURS TO KEEP.›

‹YOU'VE SERVED THE PURPOSE I GAVE YOU, AND ONE DAY YOU WILL BE REWARDED FOR THAT LOYALTY. BUT NOW--I HAVE REVEALED MYSELF. DO YOU UNDERSTAND? MY PRESENCE IS KNOWN BY MY ENEMIES. SO YOU AND YOUR OTHER BRETHREN-- THE KEEPERS OF **MY FLAME**--MUST RETURN WHAT'S MINE.›

‹I'VE GROWN WEARY OF LIVING IN THE FREAK'S BODY.›*

‹AND SO IT'S TIME...›

*See issue 200--Todd

AAAAAGGGGHHH

--TO TAKE IT BACK!!

AAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHH

HEY--LET ME GET A SHOT FROM OVER THERE TOO
IT'S WEIRD SHE'S NOT MOVING
MAYBE SHE LIKES IT. WANTS TO BE A DIVA
YO! BABY-- OVER HERE
friggin' vultures
MA'AM -- SURE YOU DON'T WANT TO SIT AWAY FROM THE WINDOW?
NO. HE TOLD ME TO STAY WHERE I WAS.
JUST THOUGHT I'D ASK--WANT TO MAKE SURE THIS DOESN'T GET *TOO* CRAZY. GUYS LIKE THEM CAN...
HEY!
MEAT-HEAD!
I TOLD YOU BOYS TO STAY OUTSIDE!
YOU GOING TO LISTEN TO ME--OR DO I HAVE TO CRACK YOU UPSIDE THE HEAD?
CAPISCE?!
EASY THERE, GRANDPA! IT WAS ONLY A FEW SECONDS.
GO! BEFORE I GET MY GUN!
MISS-- I HATE TO DO THIS--BUT I'M GOING TO HAVE TO ASK YOU TO LEAVE...
I CAN'T HAVE THIS. YOU'RE DRIVING ALL MY BUSINESS AWAY.
I'M SORRY.
PLEASE... SOMEONE'S COMING TO GET ME. JUST A FEW MORE MINUTES. I PROMISE.
I CAN'T GO OUT THERE... NOT NOW.
NOT ALL ALONE.

YOU WON'T BE ALONE.

JIM!! IT'S YOU!--*YOU'RE HERE!* I TOLD THEM YOU'D COME!

YOU KNOW THIS GUY?

YES! OF COURSE! HE'S WHY THEY'RE ALL HERE--THE CAMERA GUYS!

WHAT MAKES HIM SO SPECIAL?

DIDN'T YOU SEE? HE WAS ON T.V. AND HE HELPED THAT BOY... AND...

OH, JIM!

I'M SO GLAD YOU'RE HERE. THANK YOU. THANK YOU.

IT'S OKAY. EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE ALRIGHT.

FELLAS... IS THAT WHO I *THINK* IT IS...?

HE JUST MADE OUR NIGHT

PERFECT

YOU READY TO GO?

I THINK SO.

GOOD. THEN FOLLOW ME.

LOOKS CLEAR. I'LL TAKE THE LEAD.

THINK THEY'RE COMING BACK?
IS THERE ANOTHER EXIT?
TOMMY-- OVER HERE!
KEEP WALKING. DON'T SLOW DOWN.
HEY, SWEETHEART! WHAT'S IT LIKE DATING JESUS?
DURING SEX, DOES HE MAKE YOU SAY, "OH, *GOD!*"?
YOU!!
ALL OF YOU!! YOU SHOULD BE ASHAMED OF YOURSELVES! TREATING PEOPLE LIKE THIS!
SARA, DON'T!
IT'LL ATTRACT THE OTHERS. JUST KEEP MOVING.
DOWNING, OVER HERE!
HOW LONG YOU BEEN DATING?
DID YOU MEET AT THE HOSPITAL?
WHAT'S HER NAME?
TAKE MY CARD-- I'M FROM PLAYBOY.
clik clik clik

HOW CAN THEY BE SO CRUEL?

LISTEN TO THEM.

IGNORE IT. SHUT THEM OUT.

I'M... TRYING.

ALL RIGHT! *THAT'S ENOUGH!* LET US THROUGH!

I SAY WE *TAKE* HIM--

SOON AS HE DUCKS THE CROWD--WE *GUT* HIM AND BE ***DONE*** WITH IT.

WHAT'S YOUR RUSH?

NO RUSH. BUT WHY WAIT?

BECAUSE THIS ISN'T A GAME. WE'RE SUPPOSE TO OBSERVE HIM FIRST, THEN-- WHEN IT'S TIME AND HE'S ALONE--WE ***STRIKE!***

THOSE ARE THE NEW RULES, REMEMBER? UNTIL THEN, WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BLEND IN AND MINGLE WITH THE LOCALS-- NOT START DRAWING ATTENTION TO OURSELVES.

THIS GUY HAS TO BE MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE. 'CAUSE OTHERWISE THEY WOULDN'T HAVE CALLED US IN.

AM I RIGHT, BERNIE-- OR AM I RIGHT?

YOU'RE RIGHT.

STILL COCKY AS EVER, AREN'T YOU, ELI?

WHAT'RE YOU DOING HERE, CLOWN?

SLLRRP

PROTECTING MY INVESTMENT.

BLUDD PROMISED THERE'D BE NO INTERFERENCE ON THIS.

HE MEANT FROM THE OUTSIDE--I'M FROM THE INSIDE.

EITHER WAY, IT'S NICE TO SEE YOU BOYS AGAIN. WHAT'S IT BEEN? TWO THOUSAND YEARS, GIVE OR TAKE A DECADE.

WE'RE FREE-LANCE NOW.

I GET THAT.

BUT AS YOU KNOW, THE CURRENT BATTLEFIELD HERE ON EARTH HAS BECOME QUITE CROWDED--WITH EVERYONE LOOKING FOR SOME SORT OF EDGE. BECAUSE--AND YOU'LL HAVE TO TAKE MY WORD FOR THIS--THE WAR WE'RE FIGHTING IS GETTING NEAR ITS END. WHICH MEANS SOMEBODY--SOMEDAY--IS GOING TO BE THE CLEAR-CUT ***WINNER.***

AND I KEEP ASKING MYSELF...

WHY NOT US?

WHILE ALL THE OTHERS ARE BUSY FIGHTING AMONG THEMSELVES--BREAKING INTO SMALLER AND SMALLER FACTIONS--WHOEVER'S ABLE TO ORGANIZE THEIR ARMY AND STAY FOCUSED WILL BE IN THE BEST POSITION TO WIN.

HEAVEN. HELL. EARTH. THEY'LL ALL FALL TO THIS POWER.

WHAT'RE YOU TALKING ABOUT, OLD MAN?

MY SIDE! THE ***ONLY*** SIDE--THAT'S POISED FOR VICTORY.

YOUR BOSS--BLUDD--HE'S ALL-IN WITH ME. HE UNDER-STANDS WHAT'S AT STAKE.

HE'S *NOT* OUR BOSS.

I BEG TO DIFFER. BUT THAT'S NEITHER HERE NOR THERE. FACT IS--BLUDD'S WITH ME. MEANS YOU'RE WITH ME. AND--

I *SAID* WE'RE *FREELANCE!*

SO DON'T F**K WITH US.

JUST HEAR ME OUT.

I RESPECT THE THREE OF YOU. YOU'RE TRULY SOMETHING SPECIAL! AND BEING THE LAST OF THE *OLD GUARD*--WITH THE POWERS YOU'RE ENDOWED WITH--THAT'S THE STUFF OF LEGENDS.

BUT I'M HERE TO WARN YOU--WHATEVER YOU'RE USED TO DEALING WITH ON THESE TYPES OF ASSIGNMENTS...

MULTIPLY IT BY *TEN!*

BECAUSE THIS NEW SPAWN--HE'S THE REAL DEAL. THING IS HE DOESN'T KNOW HOW SPECIAL HE IS. NOT YET, ANYWAY. THAT IGNORANCE IS THE BIGGEST ADVANTAGE WE'VE GOT GOING FOR US. AND I'M HERE TO TELL YOU--

I DON'T CARE WHAT OUR OTHER ENEMIES DO FROM HERE ON OUT. IF WE GET CONTROL THIS SPAWN'S COSTUME THEY LOSE. NO MATTER HOW MANY THEY RECRUIT--IT WON'T MATTER. THAT GUY DOWN THERE TRUMPS *THEM ALL!*

SO YOU AND BLUDD WANT HIM TESTED.

EXACTLY! WHICH IS WHY BLUDD CALLING YOU IN ON THIS EXCITES ME TO NO END. TELLS ME HE'S THINKING ABOUT THE FULL SCOPE OF THIS SITUATION.

COOL. I'VE GOT IT.

NO YOU DON'T! 'CAUSE I DON'T HEAR FEAR IN YOUR VOICE.

THUK

YOU GO AT THIS GUY RELAXED HE'LL SLAUGHTER YOU AND NOT KNOW HOW HE DID IT.

WHAT IF THE OPPOSITE HAPPENS?...

WHAT IF WE KICK YOUR PRECIOUS HELLSPAWN'S ASS?

I GUESS WE'LL SEE, WON'T WE? AND DON'T TAKE THIS THE WRONG WAY--BUT I SURE AS HELL HOPE HE KICKS *YOUR* ASS.

BECAUSE IF OUR LITTLE SPAWN DOWN THERE *AIN'T* UP TO THE CHALLENGE YOU THREE REPRESENT--WHICH IS SAYING SOMETHING BECAUSE FEW IN HISTORY HAVE--THEN THE SHITSTORM THAT'S COMING WILL BOWL US OVER TOO.

THIS IS OUR ONLY CHANCE. SO--CAN I COUNT ON YOU?

SLLRRP

WHAT'S IN IT FOR US?

A POSITION NEAR MY SIDE. AND FULL AUTHORITY OVER THOSE WHO HAVE JOINED ME.

SOUNDS REASON-ABLE.

GOOD! THEN THE ONLY THING THE THREE OF YOU NEED TO WORRY ABOUT IS PUSHING MR. DOWNING TO HIS LIMITS.

THINK YOU CAN HANDLE THAT?

WE'LL TAKE YOUR NEW PUPPET AND BEAT HIM TO A PULP!

I LIKE THE OPTIMISM!

"JUST DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THE MAN--AS FAR AS I CAN TELL, HE'S THE GREATEST WEAPON EVER CONCEIVED."

THIS IS GETTING OUT OF CONTROL.

MAKE THEM GO AWAY...

JIM? PLEASE...!

I CAN'T.

THERE'S TOO MANY OF THEM.

WE NEED TO GET TO THE SUBWAY.

THE LIGHTS. I--I THINK I'M GOING TO BE SICK.

HERE, TAKE MY COAT. PUT IT OVER YOUR HEAD.

I NEED SOME ROOM! PLEASE! STOP CROWDING.

YOU'RE MAKING HER SICK!

CAN'T YOU *SEE* WHAT YOU'RE *DOING?* SHE'S GOING TO *PASS OUT!*

I SWEAR, IF ANY OF YOU HURT HER, I'LL...

SSSSSSSSSCCCCCCCCCRRREEEE

x2
039

WHAT HAPPENED?
SOMEONE CALL 911.
YOU PUSHED HIM! I SAW IT.
NO I DIDN'T!
HE WAS CROWDING ME... TRYING TO GET PICTURES.
DID ANYONE CALL 911?!
JIM...
HE NEEDS HELP *NOW!* HE'S BLEEDING TOO MUCH! IS THERE A DOCTOR HERE?!
SARA...?
BREATHING'S SHALLOW. HEART RATE'S LOW.
HE DOESN'T HAVE LONG.
HE'S GOING INTO SHOCK, JIM! I'M GOING TO USE YOUR COAT!... *AND KEEP THAT CROWD BACK!*

COME ON! COME ON! BREATHE!

I CAN'T STEM THE BLEEDING! GIVE ME YOUR SHIRT!

WHY DO YOU NEED MY...

JUST GIVE ME YOUR DAMN SHIRT! I NEED TO MAKE SOME TOURNIQUETS!

clik clik

clik clik clik snap

clik clik clik snap

snap snap

clik clik clik snap

RIP
RIP

I THINK THIS SHOULD WORK. JUST NEED TO GET HIS BACK-SIDE...

GOD... NO.

THERE'S MORE!

TOO MANY...

HE'S BLEEDING OUT.

I CAN'T... STOP IT.

HE'S GOING TO DIE.

x2

ME, TOO.

C'MON, DOWNING DO SOME-THING.

LOOK AT HIM.

WHY CAN'T HE SAVE HIM? THAT'S WHAT HE DID ON T.V.

YEAH, I WATCHED HIM.

JIM...?

...I SAW IT TOO...

...SAW WHAT YOU DID.

YOU'RE HIS ONLY CHANCE. I CAN'T HELP ANYMORE AND THE AMBULANCE WON'T GET HERE IN TIME.

PLEASE--FOR GOD'S SAKE-- YOU HAVE TO DO SOMETHING.

NO.

HE CAN GO TO *HELL.*

image

204

DIGITAL EDITION

SPAWN®

WHAT'S GOING THROUGH YOUR HEAD?! HE NEEDS YOUR HELP!!

CAN'T YOU SEE THAT?

YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN DO SOMETHING! SO DON'T YOU DARE STAND THERE AND TELL ME YOU'RE WILLING TO LET HIM **DIE!**

YOU LOOK ME IN THE EYE AND SAY THAT!

I DON'T BELIEVE IT!

YOU'RE A BETTER MAN THAN THAT.

SO-- WHAT'S WRONG?

WE DIDN'T DO THIS. THEY DID. ***ALL OF THEM!*** CROWDING AND PUSHING EACH OTHER--THE WAY THEY TREATED YOU--LIKE A PACK OF WOLVES! *

IT'S NOT ABOUT THAT.

IT'S ABOUT HIM.

x2

*See last issue--Todd

LISTEN TO HER, MAN. YOU HAVE TO TRY.

BECAUSE IF YOU DON'T TRY SOMETHING--I PROMISE YOU-- HE'LL DIE.

SO WE'RE BEYOND WHAT THEY DID TO ME. LET THAT GO.

SARA...

I'M GOING TO DO THIS FOR YOU.

I NEED YOU TO UNDERSTAND THIS IT'S NOT BECAUSE OF HIM OR WHAT ANYONE ELSE WANTS. THIS IS FOR YOU.

NOW STAY HERE.

Thank you.

WHAT'S HE DOING?

THE DUMBASS IS ABOUT TO BLOW HIS COVER.

WHY WOULD HE DO THAT?

BECAUSE HE'S WEAK.

COME ON...

COME ON!

GODAMMIT! WORK! WHY WON'T IT...

WOORRRKK

clik clik clik snap clik snap clik clik

clik snap clik clik clik clik clik snap clik

ung...

wha...? WHAT'S GOING ON? WHERE'S... MY CAMERA?

DID YOU SEE THAT
BILL, YOU GETTING THESE SHOTS
WOW
CALL THE OFFICE NOW
WHERE'D HE COME FROM
WHO IS THIS GUY
OH MY GOD
MOM YOU AREN'T GOING TO BELIEVE THIS
DOWNING OVER HERE
THAT LIGHT WAS LIKE AN EXPLOSION
WHAT HAPPENED
HE'S
HOW
HOLY SHIT
I COULDN'T SEE
THE DUDE'S ALIVE
HE HEALED HIM
DOWNING
WHAT
OUT OF MY WAY

WAS THAT THE COSTUME OR DID DOWNING DO THAT?

BOTH.
THAT'S WHY I WAS TRYING TO WARN YOU.*

THIS COMPLICATES OUR MISSION.

YA THINK?

*Last issue-- Todd

HEY, MITCH. MARC ROSEN HERE.

LOOK-- YEAH, I KNOW IT'S LATE. I JUST... I'M LOOKING FOR SOMETHING AND I'VE ALREADY TRIED THE COUNTY'S ONLINE DATABASE.

RIGHT, BUT WE BOTH KNOW THEIR WEBSITE ISN'T COMPLETELY ACCURATE.

NO...NO, I'M NOT SAYING THAT. I'M JUST SAYING IT ISN'T TOTALLY UP TO DATE AND I KNOW THE COURTS HAVE THEIR OWN INTERNAL SYSTEM FOR FILES. I JUST THOUGHT YOU COULD CHECK ON SOME-THING FOR ME.

NO-- I DON'T NEED IT THIS SECOND. BUT I WAS HOPING YOU COULD DIG INTO IT AT YOUR OFFICE TOMORROW.

IT'S NOT LIKE I'M ASKING YOU TO HACK NORAD, JUST LOOKING FOR A SIMPLE MARRIAGE LICENSE.

CAN YOU DO THIS FOR ME?

WHAT'S THAT?

YOU SAW THE KARLENE PHILLIPS SHOW? YEAH, HE'S THE GUY I'M WORKING WITH.

KINDA, YEAH. I'M LIKE HIS MANAGER NOW. BUT SINCE YOU SAW THE SHOW YOU KNOW HE'S HAVING TROUBLE GETTING HIS LIFE BACK TOGETHER...

WHAT?

NO. I DIDN'T SAY HE WAS MARRIED, I SAID HE MAY HAVE BEEN. I'M TRYING TO FIND ANY RECORD OF-- um -- COULD YOU HOLD ON?

HEY--

YOU ALMOST DONE?

I WISH. AFTER JIM DROPPED ***THIS BOMBSHELL*** ON ME, I'VE BEEN TRYING TO DIG UP INFORMATION FOR HIM. IT MIGHT TAKE AWHILE.

WAS HE REALLY MARRIED?

I DON'T KNOW. MAYBE. THE PICTURE SUGGESTS HE WAS, BUT AT THIS POINT I HAVE NO IDEA. WHY DO YOU CARE?

WHY DO *YOU* CARE?

YOU HAVEN'T STOPPED DROOLING OVER HIM SINCE YOU MET.

WHAT--?

WHATEVER! SOMEDAY, I'D LIKE MY BOYFRIEND BACK, SO MAYBE WHEN YOU GET DONE RUNNING ERRANDS FOR YOUR NEW BFF YOU'LL FIND TIME IN YOUR BUSY SCHEDULE TO PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR *GIRL*-FRIEND.

SLAM

BZZZT

UUH--

HEY. SORRY ABOUT THAT. SO--YOU THINK CAN HELP ME OUT?

I APPRECIATE THAT. HUH?

NO. PROBABLY NOT. THE GUY'S LIFE IS A BLANK SLATE. I'VE BEEN TRYING FOR WEEKS TO FIND ANYTHING ABOUT HIM BEFORE HIS COMA. NOTHING'S OUT THERE. IT'S LIKE HE DIDN'T EXIST BEFORE HE WOKE UP IN THAT HOSPITAL.

YEAH. NO. I REALLY DO. I'VE SEEN IT WITH MY OWN EYES--HE'S GOT SOMETHING SPECIAL. I KNOW MOST OF THOSE DAYTIME SHOWS ARE FULL OF SHIT, BUT THAT WASN'T FAKE. WHAT YOU SAW ON THE KARLENE PHILLIPS SHOW WAS THE REAL DEAL.

COOL. THANKS AGAIN. CALL ME IF YOU FIND ANYTHING. BYE.

SARA, GRAB MY HAND!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
GETTING US OUT OF HERE! NOW...
RUN!
THE POLICE-- WHAT ABOUT THEM?
I'M NOT DEALING WITH THAT NOW!
I...YOU NEED SLOW DOWN! YOU'RE GOING TOO FAST!
DO YOU HEAR ME?!
QUICK! IN HERE! BEFORE THEY COME AROUND THE CORNER!
JIM... STOP...

QUIET!

THEY'LL HEAR US!

LET'S GO.

NO! NOT UNTIL I GET SOME ANSWERS!

WHAT'S ***WRONG*** WITH YOU? WHY'RE YOU ACTING LIKE THIS? SOMETHING'S WRONG--TELL ME--WHAT IS IT? AND WHY DID YOU HESITATE BACK THERE?! THAT MAN WAS DYING--THERE WAS NOTHING TO THINK ABOUT! YOU SHOULD HAVE DONE IT ON ***YOUR OWN*** WITHOUT ME HAVING TO ***BEG YOU!*** HE WAS DYING!

DON'T YOU GET ***THAT?!***

HE WAS ***DYING!***

YOUR ACTIONS DON'T MAKE ANY SENSE! YOU HELP A BOY ON TV, BUT YOU WON'T HELP A MAN BLEEDING AT YOUR FEET!

YOU WON'T UNDER-STAND.

THEN MAKE ME!

I CAN'T!

BECAUSE... I DON'T UNDER-STAND IT MYSELF! THE HEALING! MY LIFE! THE COMA! IT'S ALL--IT'S JUST A MESS! I CAN'T FIGURE OUT HOW I GOT THESE POWERS OR HOW THEY WORK AND...

AND I DON'T KNOW WHO I AM! I THINK ABOUT THAT EVERY MINUTE. EVERY SECOND!

WHO THE HELL AM I?!!

IT'S ALL DRIVING ME ***CRAZY!***

YOU'RE RIGHT.

YOU'RE GOING THROUGH A LOT. I CAN'T BEGIN TO IMAGINE WHAT THAT MUST BE LIKE--BUT YOU HAVE A GIFT. GOD'S GIVEN YOU A GIFT. SOME-THING SO SPECIAL... SO MIRACULOUS... YOU COULD CHANGE THE WORLD.

HEY GUYS! DOWN HERE! I SEE SOME-THING!

oh, no.

SARA... DO YOU TRUST ME?

OF COURSE I DO. WITH ALL MY HEART.

THAT'S ALL I NEEDED TO KNOW.

COME HERE...

I'M GOING TO SQUEEZE YOU TIGHT.

I SWEAR.

I SAW THEM. THEY WERE BOTH HERE.

JIM... NO.
YOU'RE SCARING ME.
THIS CAN'T BE.
WHY?
BECAUSE THIS--IT'S MY APARTMENT.
I KNOW.
BUT HOW...?
I JUST THOUGHT ABOUT BEING HERE. I HAVE AS MANY UNANSWERED QUESTIONS AS YOU DO.
NOW YOU KNOW WHAT I'VE BEEN TRYING TO DEALING WITH.
AND I HOPE YOU DON'T HATE ME FOR IT.
GOODBYE, SARA.

IT'S FUNNY HOW YOU KEEP FINDING YOUR WAY BACK HERE.

RELAX. IT'S JUST ME.

WHERE THE HELL YOU BEEN?

AROUND.

YOU TOLD ME WE HAD TO BE CAREFUL-- HAD TO HIDE. AND THEN YOU JUST LEFT!

HAD TO THINK. BUT I SEE YOU DIDN'T TAKE MY ADVICE.

WHICH WAS?

ABOUT HIDING. DAYTIME TALK SHOWS, PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF POWER--THOSE AREN'T USUALLY THE ACTIONS OF SOMEONE MAKING AN EFFORT TO *AVOID* OUTSIDE ATTENTION.

THE SHOW WAS JUST A WAY TO MAKE MONEY. AND WHAT HAPPENED ON THE STREETS--I DIDN'T HAVE A CHOICE.

THAT'S AN EXCUSE! YOU *ALWAYS* HAVE A CHOICE.

I KEEP TELLING YOU--YOU'RE A TARGET. THAT SUIT. YOUR POWERS. THEY WANT THEM--WANT TO CONTROL THEM. AND NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT--HIDING FROM THE WORLD WOULD ONLY MAKE IT EASIER FOR THEM--HEAVEN, HELL, BOTH OF THEM WANT YOU TO BE ALONE, WHERE THEY CAN ATTACK WITHOUT ANYONE AROUND TO WITNESS THEIR ACTIONS.

SO I SAY... *SCREW 'EM!* GO FOR IT! BASK IN THE LIMELIGHT. BECAUSE THE MORE EYES ON YOU, THE HARDER IT'LL BE FOR ANY OF THEM TO GET CLOSE ENOUGH TO POSE ANY REAL THREAT WITHOUT REVEALING THEMSELVES.

AND TRUST ME!... THAT'S THE LAST THING THEY WANT TO DO!

JUST DON'T LET THE WORLD SEE THIS SIDE OF YOU. DON'T LET THEM KNOW JIM DOWNING AND SPAWN ARE ONE AND THE SAME. BECAUSE IF YOU DO-- THEY'LL TURN ON YOU. THIS CULTURE HATES A SINNER, JIMMY-BOY, AND THEY LOVE TO TEAR DOWN THEIR SAINTS-- AND RIGHT NOW... *YOU'RE BOTH!*

WHY DON'T THEY HUNT YOU, TOO?

THEY HAVE BEEN. OFF AND ON FOR CENTURIES.

YES!-- DON'T BE SO SURPRISED--YOU DO THIS RIGHT AND YOU CAN ALMOST BECOME *IMMORTAL!* BUT THE REASON THEY'RE FOCUSED ON YOU, AND NOT ME, IS OBVIOUS-- *JUST LOOK AT ME!* I'M A SHORT, FAT, BALD GUY! THEY EVENTUALLY FIGURED I WASN'T A THREAT TO THEM ANYMORE.

I MEAN-- IT'S NOT LIKE I CAN TURN INTO A GIANT MONSTER AND TEAR PEOPLE'S HEARTS OUT!

BUT I CAN GUIDE OTHERS. SHOW THEM HOW TO NOT MAKE THE SAME MISTAKES I DID. THAT'S THE POWER I HAVE LEFT.

HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED...

...HOW MANY EMPIRES WE'VE SEEN FALL OVER THE CENTURIES? THE ASSYRIANS. THE MONGOLS. ALEXANDER. ROME. SO MANY OTHERS.

ALL EVENTUALLY FALTERED OR HAD THEIR POWER BASES STRIPPED FROM THEM. NONE WERE CAPABLE OF HOLDING ONTO THAT WHICH THEY HAD CONQUERED.

INSTEAD THEY FADED INTO HISTORY.

BUT NOW-- WE'RE AT A PRECIPICE. WE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO FINALLY ACCOMPLISH WHAT NONE OF THOSE CIVILIZATIONS WERE ABLE TO DO--*TO CONTROL OUR DESTINY!*

THAT'S WHY I'VE CALLED YOU HERE...

...AND WHY I'VE RISKED PLACING YOU ONTO THE FIELD OF PLAY. DESPITE THE CAREFUL PLANNING BY OUR PEOPLE ACROSS THE GLOBE, WE'VE ALWAYS BEEN AT A DISADVANTAGE WHEN FACED WITH THE SHEER MIGHT OF OUR ENEMIES.

WE COULDN'T COMPETE AGAINST HEAVEN'S OR HELL'S BLOATED ARMIES.

BUT THIS NEW HELLSPAWN--THIS JIM DOWNING--REPRESENTS OUR GREATEST OPPORTUNITY YET. I BELIEVE HIS POTENTIAL TO BE NEAR LIMITLESS.

MY PLAN IS TO MAKE HIM LOYAL TO OUR CAUSE. NOT THEIRS.

AS WE SAID EARLIER, BLUDD...

...THE GUY'S BECOMING SOMETHING OF A CELEBRITY. AND HIS STUNT TODAY ISN'T GOING TO HELP MATTERS.

TRUTH

THIS MEDIA ATTENTION IS GOING TO TURN INTO A CIRCUS!

my bad.

SO, IF YOU WANT US TO TEST HIM, I RECOMMEND WE DO IT SOONER RATHER THAN LATER.

THEN GO NOW-- TONIGHT.

YOU WANT US TO NOTIFY THE CLOWN?

NO. I'LL DEAL WITH HIM IF HE FINDS OUT.

MY BIGGER CONCERN IS THAT YOU SEE FOR YOURSELVES IF MR. DOWNING IS WORTHY OF OUR ATTENTION, OR IF HE'S JUST ANOTHER IN A LONG LINE OF MEANINGLESS "PAWNS."

Open Day

DETECTIVE WILLIAMS, THANK YOU FOR YOUR PATIENCE.

AS YOU KNOW, WE'VE BEEN KEEPING A CLOSE EYE ON YOUR PARTNER'S STATUS. WHILE THE INITIAL TRAUMA WAS DUE TO A ***SEVERE*** BLOCKAGE IN HIS DORSAL AORTA, HIS BODY ISN'T ACTING LIKE THAT OF A CARDIAC PATIENT.

MEANING, HE'S NOT IMPROVING LIKE WE WOULD HAVE HOPED. THE GOOD NEWS IS--HE ***DOESN'T*** SEEM TO BE GETTING ***WORSE,*** AND THAT, DESPITE EVERYTHING ELSE, IS A REASON FOR OPTIMISM.

HIS LAST BATCH OF TESTS RULED OUT SOME OF OUR POTENTIAL CONCERNS BUT THERE WERE A FEW ***ABNORMAL*** READINGS THAT WARRANT FURTHER EXAMINATION.

OUR NEXT MOVE IS TO SEND THE RESULTS OUT TO A COUPLE OF SPECIALISTS TO GET THEIR OPINIONS.

DO WE HAVE TIME FOR THAT?

I BELIEVE SO. SINCE HE'S STABILIZED, THIS'LL BE OUR BEST OPPORTUNITY. I CAN'T MAKE ANY PROMISES HOW LONG THAT CONDITION WILL LAST, GIVEN THE NUMBER OF IRREGULAR READINGS WE'RE SEEING.

IT'S ALMOST LIKE HIS BODY IS RE-WIRING ITSELF...

"...AND WE DON'T KNOW WHY THAT WOULD BE HAPPENING."

BUT AS I SAID, MOST OF HIS OTHER VITALS SEEM TO BE NORMAL FOR A MAN HIS AGE AND WEIGHT. WHAT'S COMPLICATING MATTERS--AS YOU MIGHT IMAGINE--IS DETECTIVE BURKE'S LACK OF PREVENTATIVE CARE.

SO WE'RE STILL TRYING TO DETERMINE WHETHER SOME OTHER AREAS OF CONCERN ARE A DIRECT RESULT OF HIS HEART ATTACK OR SIMPLY A BY PRODUCT OF HIS UNHEALTHY DIET THROUGH THE YEARS.

HE'S ALWAYS BEEN STUBBORN THAT WAY.

WELL, I'D LIKE YOUR HELP IN FORCEFULLY RECOMMENDING HE CHANGE THOSE WAYS. ONCE HIS CONDITION IS STABILIZED, I'D HATE TO SEE HIM BACK HERE BECAUSE OF TOO MUCH FAST FOOD.

Capullo

UNDER-STOOD.

NOW GO HOME TO YOUR FAMILY. I'LL CALL YOU THE MINUTE WE HAVE ANY FURTHER NEWS.

HEY, KYLE-- I DIDN'T WAKE YOU, DID I?

GOOD. I...

WHAT? NO WAY! I THOUGHT YOU BROKE UP WITH HER A COUPLE MONTHS AGO!

THAT SOUNDS LIKE A NEUROTIC, LOVESICK BACHELOR TALKING. THAT'S NOT WHY I CALLED, THOUGH.

REMEMBER THAT REPORT YOU DID LAST YEAR ABOUT THE GUY THAT DID FORENSIC EVIDENCE TESTING?... NO, NO NOT THE TALL BLONDE... CHRIST! DO YOU EVER GIVE IT A REST?--NO, I'M TALKING ABOUT THE OTHER GUY. THE ONE THAT DID SOME CARBON DATING ON DOCUMENTS.

THAT'S HIM!

YOU STILL HAVE A CONTACT FOR HIM? AND WHAT WAS HIS WEBSITE CALLED AGAIN?

THINK YOU CAN FIND IT AGAIN?-- GREAT!

OH. IT'S JUST THIS GUY-- YOU KNOW, 'THE HEALER'--HE GAVE ME SOMETHING AND I'M TRYING TO SEE IF...

MARC!!

HANG ON A SEC.

I'M ON THE PHONE! I'LL BE DONE IN A WHILE!

GET YOUR ASS IN HERE! NOW!!

UM, KYLE...

I'VE GOTTA GO. SUSAN'S HAVING HER PERIOD OR SOME-THING.

I REALLY NEED THAT INFO FIRST THING TOMORROW. OKAY?

THANKS.

LOOK, SUSAN, I'M SORRY I'VE...

I DON'T CARE ABOUT THAT! HAVE YOU CHECKED YOUR TEXT MESSAGES LATELY?

WHY?

LOOK! HOW'S HE-- I MEAN, *MY GOD!*-- WHAT THE HELL IS THAT?

LIVE CNR

...BEFORE POLICE COULD ARRIVE HE FLED ON FOOT. AUTHORITIES ARE STILL TRYING TO LOCATE HIM...

...BUT AS YOU'VE SEEN FROM THESE VIDEOS, THE MYSTERY OF JIM DOWNING CONTINUES TO ESCALATE.

EYEWITNESSES HAVE ALL CONFIRMED WHAT SEEMS TO BE AN ACT OF IMPOSSIBLE MAGNITUDE! WE'LL STAY LIVE WITH THIS STORY AFTER THE BREAK, AS WE TALK TO EXPERTS REPRESENTING BOTH MEDICAL AND THEOLOGICAL VIEWPOINTS.

SAVIOR?

SONY

THIS...

...IS GOING TO BE HUGE!

TO BE CONTINUED...

image

205

DIGITAL EDITION

SPAWN®

The Internet. In a private chat room

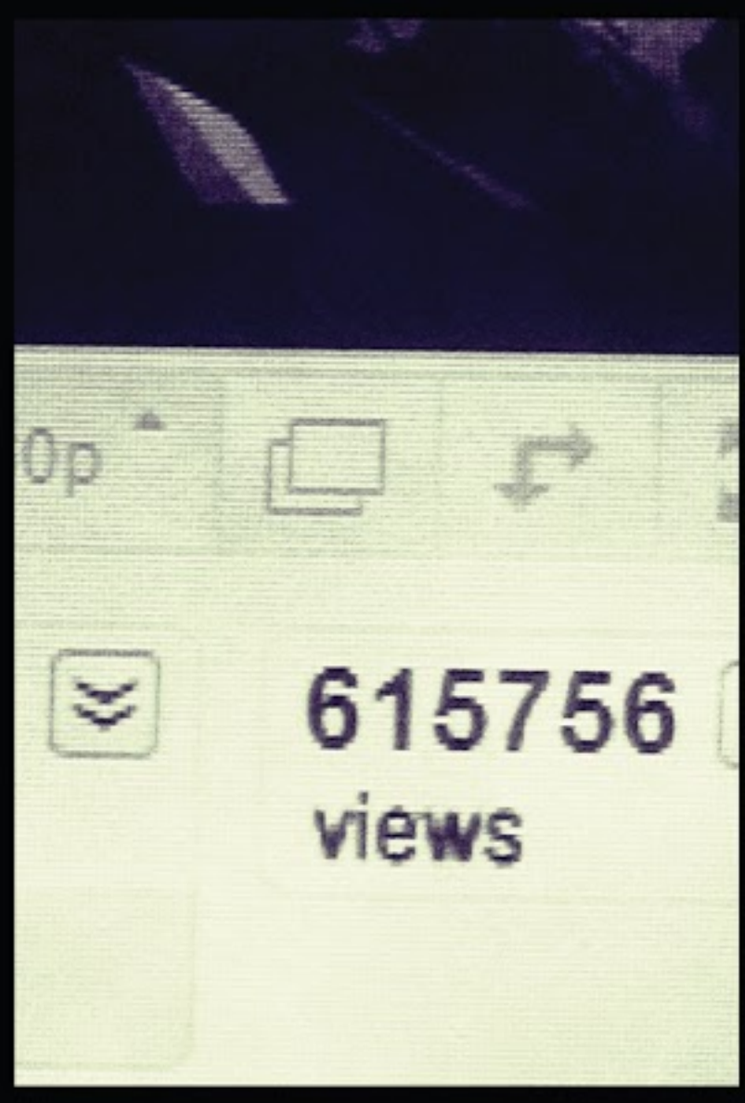
Hellspwn: You see this yet?
AngelsROK: See what?
Hellspwn: Where you been hiding?

Hellspwn: The dude in New York.

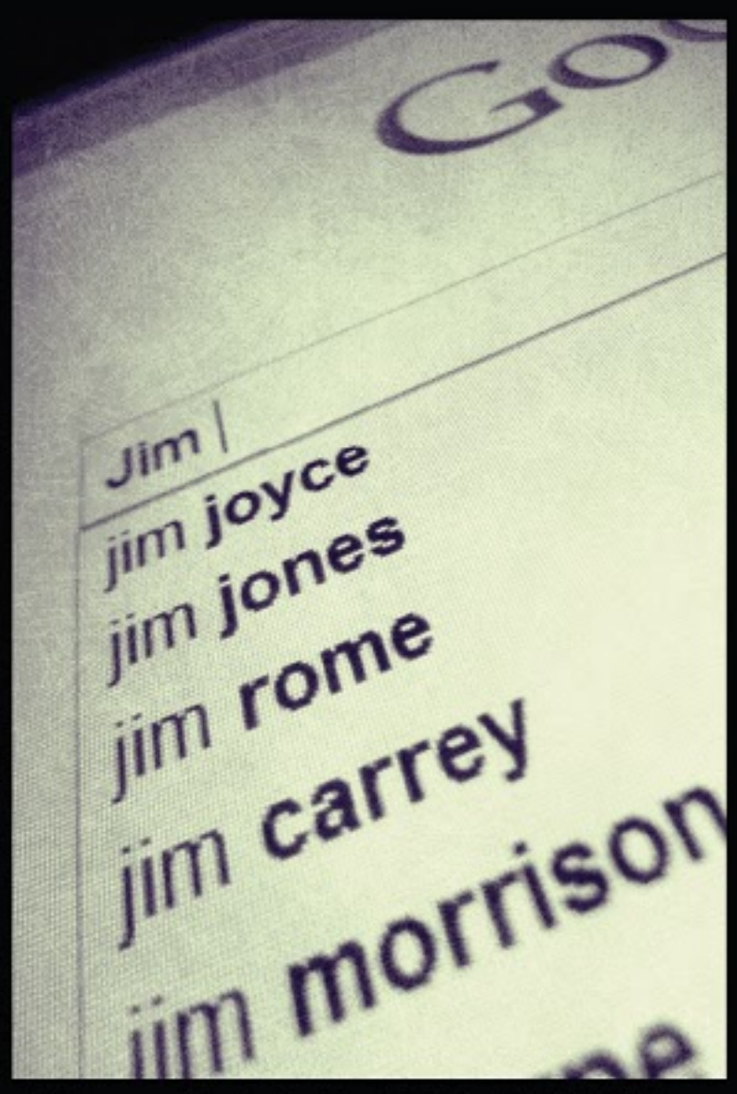
AngelsROK: Lots of 'dudes' there. Which one?
Hellspwn: The one THAT WAS ON TV!!!!

AngelsROK: Still don't know what you're talking about.

Hellspwn: WOW! Do a search for 'Jim Downing'
AngelsROK: That phony healer guy?

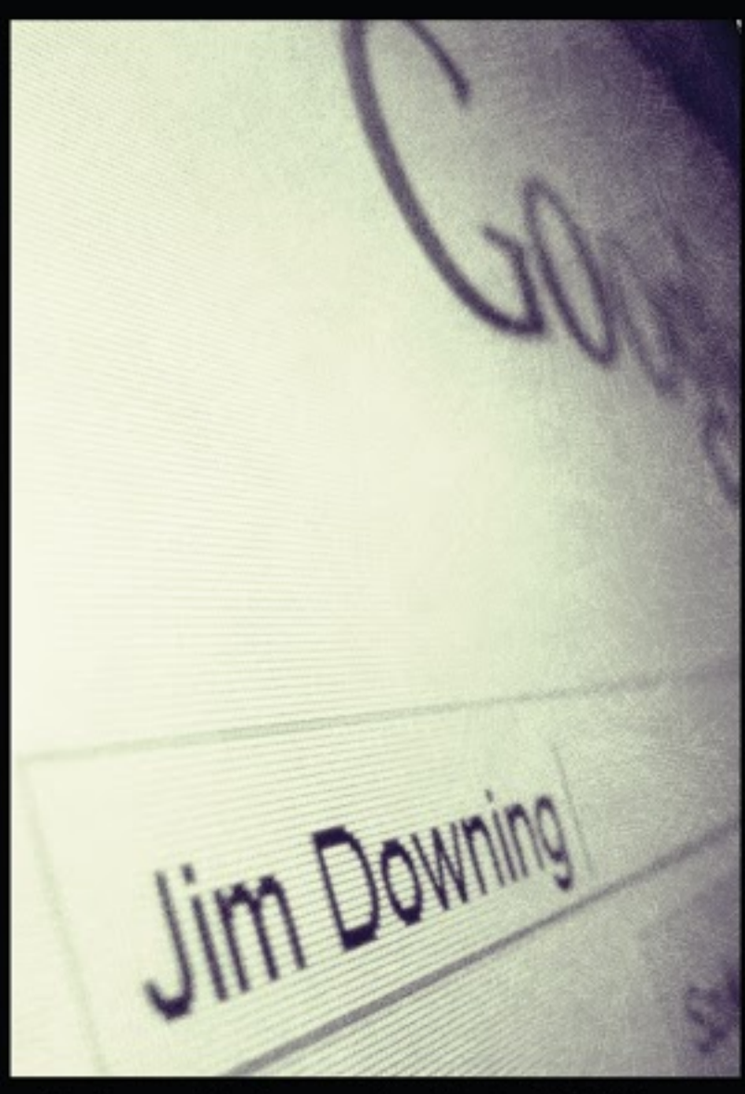


Hellspwn: Yeah.



Redeemer69: He's right. This is AMAZING!!!
AngelsROK: Why?

Hellspwn: Just watch the clip!!!



Redeemer69: Because it might be REAL!!!

New York City.

AMATEUR FOOTAGE HAS BEGUN FLOODING ITS WAY ONTO THE INTERNET AND VARIOUS NEWS OUTLETS. THESE CLIPS SHOW A MAN NAMED JIM DOWNING AS HE--SOMEHOW--WILLS A SEVERELY INJURED MAN BACK TO HEALTH.

Paris.

Baghdad.

Moscow.

London.

Rome.

MR. DOWNING WAS ALSO SEEN A FEW DAYS AGO PERFORMING A SIMILAR ACT OF MERCY ON THE KARLENE PHILLIPS SHOW. MOST CRITICS VIEWED THAT AS NOTHING MORE THAN A RATINGS STUNT--BUT THESE LATEST VIDEOS NOW GIVE CREDENCE TO WHAT SOME EYE-WITNESS ACCOUNTS ARE CALLING A 'REAL LIFE RESURRECTION.'

Later that Evening

RECAPPING OUR TOP STORY-- THE STREETS OF NEW YORK BECAME THE SITE OF WHAT SOME DOCTORS ARE CALLING A 'GENUINE MIRACLE.' A PERSON IDENTIFIED AS JIM DOWNING HAS AGAIN PERFORMED A FEAT THAT, AS YET, CANNOT BE EXPLAINED AWAY. THIS MARKS THE THIRD SUCH OCCURRENCE IN WHICH MR. DOWNING WAS AT THE CENTER.

THE FIRST WAS A STRING OF INEXPLICABLE RECOVERIES AT TWO NEW YORK CITY HOSPITALS. CERTAIN PATIENTS HAD BEEN IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH ANOTHER PATIENT, WHO DOCTORS ARE IDENTIFYING AS MR. DOWNING.

THEN RECENTLY, ON LIVE TELEVISION, HE CURED A YOUNG BOY'S UNTREATABLE CONDITION. IN BOTH INSTANCES, OUR PRODUCERS LEARNED THAT A GROUP OF DOCTORS PERFORMED THOROUGH TESTS ON THESE 'CURED' PATIENTS. CONFIRMING THE AILMENTS HAD COMPLETELY DISAPPEARED.

MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS ARE AT A LOSS FOR ANY EXPLANATION.

SO, WHAT HAD FIRST SEEMED A HOAX IS FAST BECOMING A NATIONAL STORY. AS REPORTED EARLIER, MR. DOWNING HAD ONLY RECENTLY COME OUT OF A COMA. BUT, TRY AS THEY MIGHT, HIS DOCTORS HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO CONFIRM HIS IDENTITY. TO DATE, NO BACKGROUND INFORMATION OR RECORDS HAVE SURFACED. MR. DOWNING HIMSELF SEEMS UNABLE TO PROVIDE ANY DETAILS RELATING TO HIS PAST.

WITNESSES TO THE LATEST 'MIRACLE' SAID MR. DOWNING FLED WITH A FEMALE COMPANION, SOMEHOW ELUDING REPORTERS. WHEN QUESTIONED AS TO HIS WHEREABOUTS, THE POLICE HAD NO COMMENT.

"HIS FLIGHT FROM THE SCENE HAS INTRODUCED THE POSSIBILITY OF A TROUBLED PAST. AUTHORITIES CONTINUE TO LOOK FOR BOTH MR. DOWNING AND THE YOUNG FEMALE HE WAS LAST SEEN WITH.

"BY ONE ACCOUNT, MR. DOWNING AND THE WOMAN SEEMED TO VANISH INTO THIN AIR.

"OTHERS SAY HE WAS JUST ABLE TO HIDE IN THE SHADOWS."

HE HAS TO KNOW WE'LL COME LOOKING FOR HIM.

THAT'S JUST IT-- I DON'T THINK HE KNOWS *ANYTHING.*

YOU SAW HOW HE WAS ACTING WITH THE HUMANS. THIS GUY DOESN'T SEEM TO BE CLEAR ON THE RULES YET, WHICH MEANS IT'S POSSIBLE HE'S ONLY ACTING ON INSTINCTS, NOT INTELLIGENCE.

AND IF THAT'S TRUE-- PREVIOUS SPAWNS TENDED TO GRAVITATE TOWARDS THE *'DEAD ZONES.'* LIKE SOME DAMN *BEACON.* THEY FEEL SAFE THERE.

BESIDES, I TALKED WITH A COUPLE OF OUR LOOKOUTS-- THEY BOTH SAID THE SHADOWS HAVE BEEN ACTING WEIRD RECENTLY.

SO, I'M BETTING HE STILL HAS TO BE...

...NEAR.

WOW.

REALLY?

TELL ME YOU AREN'T DUMB ENOUGH TO HAVE BEEN WAITING HERE THE WHOLE TIME?

I'M GETTING TIRED OF YOU REPORTERS.

Whew! THAT'S A RELIEF! YOU'RE ONLY ***STUPID***, NOT SUICIDAL. NOT THAT IT'LL MAKE MUCH DIFFERENCE.

SO...YOU GOING TO ACT LIKE A BIG SHOT AND MAKE THIS DIFFICULT-- OR CAN WE JUST TAKE THE EASY ROUTE?

I'LL GIVE YOU TEN SECONDS TO ***LEAVE!***

DIFFICULT IT IS, THEN!

LET'S GET THE OBVIOUS TEST OUT OF THE WAY FIRST.

BLAM

GOOD.

WE WERE HOPING FOR A CHALLENGE TONIGHT.

FWIP

THUP

THOUGH I HAVE TO SAY... I'VE NEVER SEEN ONE REGENERATE ITSELF QUITE *THAT* FAST.

BEEN AWHILE SINCE WE'VE SEEN A SYMBIOTE ATTEMPT THAT TRICK.

WOULDN'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE POWER YOU ABSORBED FROM DECAPITATING ONE OF OUR MEMBERS--WOULD IT?*

*Issue 201--Todd

GIRLS GIRLS GIRLS

Hiring Dancers Now!
Call 568-222.
Open Monday through Saturday 11am-2am.
Closed Sunday.

I DIDN'T ASK HIM.

MIND IF I TRY NOW?

DEPENDS. THAT THING LOADED?

Open Monday through Saturday 11am-2am. Closed Sunday.

THAT THE *BEST* YOU'VE GOT?!

FAR FROM IT!

VRRRR

COVER YOUR EYES.

WOMP

WHO'S NEXT?

NO... I HAVE NO IDEA HOW TO GET AHOLD OF HIM.

SO, NO, YOU CAN'T BOOK HIM ON YOUR SHOW.

ME? WHAT WOULD I TALK ABOUT? I'M NOT...

BREEP

CAN YOU HOLD A MOMENT, PLEASE?

HELLO?

SORRY, HE'S NOT HERE, AND I DON'T KNOW WHEN HE'LL RETURN. SO TEXT ME YOUR INFO TO THE NUMBER YOU JUST DIALED...

BREEP

HELLO, THIS IS MARC ROSEN.

YES, I'M HIS MANAGER! BUT I CAN'T HELP YOU OUT.

LISTEN, BUD, I GET YOU HAVE DEADLINES. NOT MY PROBLEM! CALL BACK LATER!

SO IF HE DOESN'T GIVE YOU AN EXCLUSIVE, YOUR OFFER ISN'T GOOD? SWEETHEART, I HAVE TO TELL YOU, I'VE BEEN FIELDING CALLS FOR TWO HOURS AND I'VE HAD A DOZEN OFFERS BETTER THAN YOURS.

SO, WOULD THAT ARTICLE INCLUDE THE COVER OF YOUR MAGAZINE, OR NOT?

Minutes later

SUSAN--HEY, SUSAN! DID YOU GET IN TOUCH WITH SARA YET?

EXCUSE ME, SOME-ONE'S YELLING AT ME ACROSS THE ROOM.

NO...BUT I'VE LEFT ABOUT TWENTY MESSAGES.

I APOLOGIZE... WHAT NETWORK ARE YOU CALLING FROM?

TRY HER AGAIN!

SHE'S THE ONLY ONE WHO MIGHT KNOW WHERE JIM IS.

FINE.

I'M GOING TO CHECK WITH THE POLICE AGAIN.

BRINNG

BRINNG BRINNG
clik

HELLO, THIS IS SARA. SORRY I MISSED YOUR CALL. PLEASE LEAVE A MESSAGE AFTER THE BEEP...AND GOD BLESS YOU.

BEEEEP

SARA, THIS IS SUSAN. WE JUST WANT TO MAKE SURE YOU'RE OKAY. WE HAVEN'T HEARD FROM YOU. REPORTS HAVE SAID YOU AND JIM RAN AWAY--IF YOU GET THIS MESSAGE JUST CALL OR TEXT MARC TO SAY YOU'RE OKAY.

WE'RE WORRIED ABOUT YOU.

Victoria de Durango, Mexico

<JAVIER...>

<WHAT IS IT?>

<WHAT'S WRONG?! IS SOMEONE HURT? HAS THERE BEEN AN ACCIDENT?!>

<NO.>
<IT'S NOTHING LIKE THAT.>
<THEN WHAT?>
<IT'S THAT TIME. THE ONE WE'VE TALKED ABOUT BEFORE.>
<HE'S HERE?>
<YES.>
<THEN PLEASE--I BEG YOU--DON'T OPEN THAT DOOR.>
<THINK OF YOUR FAMILY... >
<I HAVE MY DUTY.>
<WHY? WHY CAN'T THEY FORGET ABOUT YOU? HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN...?>
<YOU NEED TO GO.>
<ALEXANDER!... TAKE HER.>
<NO!>
<LEAVE ME ALONE! I WANT TO STAY!>
<HE'S MY HUSBAND!>
<FAREWELL, MY LOVE.>
<DON'T OPEN THAT DOOR!!>
<DON'T!... JAVIER--YOU CAN'T!!>

<LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH.>

<ALWAYS THE EFFICIENT ONE, WEREN'T YOU?>

<YEAH--AND YOU'RE A BASTARD FOR COMING TO MY DOORSTEP.>

<STRANGE, ISN'T IT?>

<HOW ALL OF YOU BEGGED ME TO MAKE YOU A PART OF THIS.>

<YOU ALL **CRAVED** THE POWER AND PRESTIGE YOU'D RECEIVE BY HOLDING MY SECRET. BUT NOW THAT IT'S TIME TO COLLECT WHAT'S RIGHTFULLY **MINE...**>

<...YOU STAND THERE AND **INSULT ME?!!**>

<THEN I'LL MAKE SURE THIS **HURTS** EVEN MORE THAN YOU CAN IMAGINE--AND THAT YOUR WIFE HEARS **EVERY ONE OF YOUR SCREAMS!**

AAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHH

GOD!

OH MY... GOD!

YES!

YES! THAT'S IT!

CLOWN...

I KNOW YOU'RE THERE.

HEARD YOU WERE LOOKING FOR ME. FIGURED I'D DROP BY AND SEE WHAT'S UP.

I'M NOT INTERRUPTING, AM I?

SNAP

BABY-- WHO YOU TALKING TO? I DON'T WANT YOU TO STOP!

KEEP DOING IT! C'MON-- *DON'T STOP!*

SHHHHH...

I'M NEARLY DONE.

THIS NEW SPAWN--HE'S BEEN DRAWING ATTENTION TO HIMSELF AT A TIME YOU SAID WE NEEDED TO BE MORE DISCREET.

SHOULD I BE CONCERNED?

YOU KNOW AS WELL AS I DO THAT MALEBOLGIA FIGHTS HIS WARS IN THE SHADOWS. HE DOESN'T BELIEVE IN SCARING THE POPULACE *TOO MUCH*--BECAUSE THEY MIGHT GO RELIGIOUS ON HIM.

INSTEAD HE GETS OTHERS TO DO HIS DIRTY WORK.

BY CONSTANTLY TEMPTING THE HUMANS WITH SIN.

RIGHT! THEN HE RECRUITS THEM AFTER THEY'RE TAINTED.

SO, I FIGURE THE MORE LIGHT SHINING ON SPAWN, THE SAFER HE'LL BE... AT LEAST FOR AWHILE.

WHICH IS WHY YOU AND I NEED TO BE ON THE SAME PAGE--OF EVERY ASPECT AND DETAIL WE'RE GOING TO IMPLEMENT. SO YOU WANT TO BE IN CHARGE--THEN FINE! DO IT! ***LEAD US!***

BUT STOP YOUR DAMN ***PUSSY-FOOTING*** AROUND! WE NEED TO SEIZE CONTROL OF THE SPAWN COSTUME. SHORT OF THAT, WE'LL LOSE.

HOW LONG BEFORE HE'S AT FULL STRENGTH AGAIN?

YOU MEAN, MALEBOLGIA?

HARD TO TELL. I HEARD HE SHOWED UP IN RUSSIA RECENTLY AND VAPORIZED SOME FORMER PROFESSOR WHO'D GONE OFF THE DEEP END A FEW YEARS AGO.

THAT MEANS HE'S COLLECTING AGAIN. AND IF HE SUCCEEDS, HIS POWER WILL BE EVEN GREATER THAN IT WAS BEFORE.

DING! DING! DING!

THAT'S WHAT I'VE BEEN TRYING TO TELL YOU, ***NUMB NUTS!***

YOU NEED TO LEARN TO CONTROL YOURSELF, CLOWN. AND SPEAKING OF CONTROL...

"...I NEEDED TO SEE HOW MUCH CONTROL YOU'RE EXERTING OVER THIS SPAWN."

"LET ME GUESS...THAT'S WHY YOU BROUGHT IN SOME OF THE OLD GUARD, unh?* THOUGHT THEY COULD HELP SPEED THINGS ALONG, DID YOU? NOT A BAD IDEA.

*See issue 203--Todd

"BUT I HAVE TO TELL YOU, BLUDD--YOU GOING BEHIND MY BACK, THAT'S NOT HOW THINGS ARE GOING TO WORK, GOT IT?--IF WE CAN'T FIND A WAY TO TRUST EACH OTHER, THEN WE'RE ***BOTH DEAD*** WHEN FREAK BECOMES MALEBOLGIA.

"YOU'RE RIGHT. NEITHER OF US IS STRONG ENOUGH ON OUR OWN."

HEY, SPAWNIE! WE'RE JUST GETTING WARMED UP.

WATCH THIS CONVERSION!

"SO, WHAT'RE YOUR BOYS DOING NOW?"

"RUNNING AN ERRAND FOR ME. ONE WHICH YOU'LL FIND QUITE INTERESTING.

"I TOLD THEM TO PUT SPAWN THROUGH A SET OF TESTS, TO GAUGE WHAT WE'RE ACTUALLY DEALING WITH. HOPE YOU DON'T MIND."

"NOT AT ALL. BESIDES, I'VE ALREADY HAD A PEP TALK WITH THE THREE OF THEM-- HOPE YOU DON'T MIND EITHER. 'CAUSE THE LAST THING WE NEED..."

"... ARE MORE SURPRISES!"

To be continued

image

206

DIGITAL EDITION

SPAWN

FIGHT!
GOD DAMN YOU! WHY WON'T YOU FIGHT?!

YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE SO *SPECIAL!*

THAT YOUR POWERS WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN *DESTROYING* OUR ENEMIES!

THEY SAID THAT-- SOMEHOW-- YOU'RE CAPABLE OF TIPPING THE SCALES OF THIS *WAR!*

THAT'S WHY THEY SENT US! THEY WANTED US TO SEE IT FOR OURSELVES!

WHAT'S MAKING THEM *SO AFRAID* OF YOU?

BUT-- *I DON'T SEE ANY OF THAT!*

WHAT ARE YOU HIDING?!!

CLOMP

AARRGHHHHH

THAT'S WHAT THEY'RE AFRAID OF. I DO THINGS THEY CAN'T.

SO-- YOU WANT A PIECE OF ME...

I'M RIGHT HERE.

HE'S GONE!

NO, HE ISN'T.

...AS LOCAL AUTHORITIES CONTINUE THEIR CITY WIDE MANHUNT.

THE SEARCH FOR MR. DOWNING, STARTED EARLIER THIS EVENING--

--FOLLOWING A MIRACULOUS ACT PREFORMED RIGHT HERE ON THE STREETS OF NEW YORK CITY.

LIVE CNR

MR. DOWNING-- IN FRONT OF A CROWD OF ONLOOKERS AND CAPTURED ON-CAMERA--APPEARED TO HEAL A GRAVELY INJURED MAN, WITH WHAT'S BEEN DESCRIBED BY EYEWITNESSES AS A "LAYING ON OF HANDS," FOLLOWED BY A BLINDING BURST OF LIGHT.

lk show host Karlene Phillips diagnosed with terminal canc

BEFORE WE REPLAY THE FOOTAGE--TAKEN LIVE AT THE SCENE-- I'D LIKE TO REMIND VIEWERS THAT WHAT YOU ARE ABOUT TO SEE IS FAIRLY GRAPHIC IN NATURE.

ROWAND? IT'S ME, DETECTIVE WILLIAMS. YOU AT THE HOSPITAL YET?

YEAH. JUST GOT HERE. WHERE YOU AT?

I HAD TO STEP OUT.

SOME-THING I CAN HELP WITH?

NO. THIS IS SOMETHING I NEED TO DO ON MY OWN. BUT YOU CAN DO ME A FAVOR...

I NEED YOU TO CHECK ON SAM FOR ME. EVERY HOUR, IF POSSIBLE.

SURE. I JUST STUCK MY HEAD IN--HE'S OUT LIKE A LIGHT.

BUT LET ME ASK YOU SOMETHING-- YOU BEEN WATCHING ANY NEWS?

A LITTLE.

LOOKS LIKE OUR BOY HAS BEEN KEEPING HIMSELF QUITE BUSY.

21

THAT'S AN UNDER-STATEMENT.

AND HIS BEHAVIOR, IT'S GETTING MORE ERRATIC.

WHAT MAKES YOU SAY THAT?

I MEAN, FOR A GUY TRYING TO FIND HIS PAST--uh ... YOU HEARD ABOUT HIS STORY FROM THE KARLENE PHILLIPS SHOW, RIGHT?

YEAH.

WELL, EITHER HE LIKES THE MEDIA LIMELIGHT OR HE DOESN'T. RIGHT NOW I CAN'T FIGURE OUT WHICH IT IS. ONE SECOND HE'S SOAKING UP THE CAMERA, THE NEXT HE'S RUNNING AWAY FROM EVERYONE HE SEES.

WHAT'S HE SO AFRAID OF?

DON'T KNOW, BUT HE'S NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO RUN FROM ALL THE ATTENTION HE'S ATTRACTING FOR LONG. WE MAY HAVE TO QUESTION HIM AFTER THEY FIND HIM.

SO--WHAT'S THE PLAN HERE? THOUGHT WE WERE GOING MEET UP--COMPARE NOTES.

BEDFORD

BABA BOOEY

WE WERE--THERE'S SOMETHING I NEEDED TO LOOK INTO FIRST. IT SHOULDN'T--

YOU'VE GOT A LEAD?

STILL WORKING ON IT. I'M GOING TO VISIT AN OLD CONTACT.

CAN YOUR CONTACT CAN HELP FIND DOWNING? IT'D BE A WHOLE LOT EASIER IF WE GOT TO HIM BEFORE THE MEDIA DOES. ESPECIALLY AFTER THE STUNT HE PULLED TODAY.

BECAUSE WE BOTH KNOW, IF WE DON'T GET TO HIM FIRST, WE WON'T GET WITHIN A HUNDRED YARDS OF THIS GUY--THE FEDS, D.A. AND EVERY STARF**KER IN THIS TOWN--HELL, IN THE ENTIRE STATE--WILL BE LOOKING TO GET THEIR HOOKS INTO THIS CRAZINESS.

I KNOW. TIME'S BECOMING AN ENEMY.

SO, I'LL DO WHAT I NEED TO AND HOPEFULLY BE BACK IN AN HOUR OR SO. NO PROMISES, THOUGH.

MUST BE SOME SPECIAL A CONTACT FOR YOU TO LEAVE SAM'S SIDE.

I DON'T HAVE A CHOICE HERE. JUST STAY WITH SAM--JUST... MAKE SURE YOU KEEP AN EYE ON HIM. I'LL GET BACK AS SOON AS I CAN.

I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE-- BUT, TWITCH? I HAD A THOUGHT...

I'M LISTENING.

WHAT IF, YOU KNOW--WHAT IF ALL THIS SHIT THE NEWS IS SAYING ABOUT DOWNING IS TRUE? THAT HE'S SOME KIND OF MIRACLE WORKER. WE NAB HIM FIRST--HE MAY BE ABLE TO HELP YOUR PARTNER.

THAT'S CROSSED MY MIND ALREADY.

THEN I HOPE TO GOD YOUR 'CONTACT' IS AS GOOD AS YOU THINK, AND HE CAN HELP US WITH SOME OF THIS.

THAT DEPENDS.

ON?

IF HE'S HOME.

AND IF HE'S NOT?

FOR SAM'S SAKE, I DON'T WANT TO THINK ABOUT THAT.

CAREFUL.

THE SPAWN ISN'T GONE. THE SYMBIOTE'S USING THE SHADOWS TO CLOAK ITSELF.

IT'S HIDING-- TRYING TO RECOVER FROM THE GUNSHOT WOUND. I KNEW IT ***REGENERATED ITSELF*** TOO QUICKLY. *

*Last issue--Todd

IT NEEDS TIME TO CATCH ITS BREATH. I'VE SEEN THE HELLSPAWN USE THIS TRICK BEFORE.

SO, BE ALERT!

HE COULD BE IN ANY OF THE SHADOW MASSES AT YOUR FEET, OR ON THE WALLS. AND THE LONGER HE STAYS IN THE DARK, THE STRONGER THE SYMBIOTE GETS.

THAT'S WHY IT APPEARS MOSTLY AT NIGHT. LIKE WE THIRST FOR BLOOD, THE COSTUME CRAVES DARKNESS TO SUSTAIN ITSELF.

IT THINKS IT'S SAFER-- ***MORE POWERFUL*** --IN THE SHADOWS.

WE'LL SEE ABOUT THAT.

unh?

CLINK SHTIK CLINK SHTIK CLINK SHTIK

BROTHERS...?!!
HELP!!!

THE WALL!
HE GOT SUCKED INTO THE WALL!
NOT THE WALL...
THE SHADOWS!

I DON'T CARE! I'M GETTING HIM BACK. WHER-EVER THEY ARE!
KRASH

STOP!

THE SPAWN ISN'T HIDING BEHIND BRICKS. HE'S MOVING. WATCHING-- TAUNTING US!

SO *CONTROL* YOUR EMOTIONS! HE'S TRYING TO SEPARATE US. WE NEED TO STAY TOGETHER! NOT LET HIM PICK US OFF ONE BY ONE.

DON'T GIVE HIM *THAT ADVANTAGE.*

HE KNOWS HE'S STILL OUT-NUMBERED.

SNIK

SHEEK

CLINK

YOU HAVE ANY CLUE WHERE HE COULD BE?

I COULD CHECK A COUPLE PLACES, BUT SARA SAID WHEN HE DOES THIS, HE'S HARD TO FIND. I THINK WE JUST NEED TO HANG TIGHT-- HE'LL CALL EVENTUALLY.

WHAT ABOUT THE POLICE? WHAT'D YOU TELL THEM?

I SAID AS SOON AS HE SHOWS UP I'D LET HIM KNOW THEY'D LIKE TO TALK TO HIM. I MEAN, REALLY, WHAT ARE THEY GOING TO DO-- GET MAD BECAUSE HE SAVED SOMEONE'S LIFE? AIN'T HAPPENING. THEY'RE JUST AS CURIOUS AS EVERY-ONE ELSE THAT'S BEEN CALLING TODAY.

THEY ALL WANT A PIECE OF HIM. AND BETTER YET, THEY'RE WILLING TO PAY FOR IT!

DO YOU KNOW HOW MANY COMPANIES I'VE TALKED WITH TODAY? EACH ONE WANTING HIM TO BE A CELEBRITY SPOKESMAN--FORD, WELLS FARGO, BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD, SAKS FIFTH AVENUE, DELL, YOU NAME IT!

GATORADE EVEN WANTS TO PRODUCE SOME NEW 'FORTIFIED' HEALTH DRINK, AND ALREADY HAVE A SLOGAN FOR IT--"IT'LL PUT THE ***LIFE*** BACK INTO YOU!" ISN'T THAT CRAZY?!

AND SOME COMPANY CALLED McFARLANE TOYS.

NEVER HEARD OF THEM.

ME EITHER. THAT'S WHY I BLEW THEM OFF. I TOLD THEM I WASN'T INTERESTED IN ***CHEAP, PLASTIC CRAP.*** BUT THE REST OF THEM ARE GIANTS IN THEIR INDUSTRY. AND NONE OF THEM MENTIONED ANYTHING UNDER SIX FIGURE SALARIES.

I THOUGHT YOU SAID THEY WANTED PROOF OF JIM'S POWERS FIRST.

THEY DO.

THAT'S THE EASY PART. I'M TELLING YOU, BABE, ***THIS IS IT!*** THIS IS THE BEGINNING OF WHAT WE'VE BOTH BEEN LOOKING FOR. I CAN FEEL IT. CAN'T YOU?

I SUPPOSE. HE DID MAKE YOU HIS NEW AGENT...

MANAGER.

WHAT-EVER. SO I GUESS WE CAN...

BZZZT

THERE'S YOUR PHONE AGAIN.

HERE, YOU WANT TO TAKE IT?

NO. NO. NO.

I'M BURNT OUT FOR TODAY. JUST LET IT GO TO VOICE MAIL.

MISTER BIG SHOT IS TOO BUSY TO TAKE CALLS... GIVE ME A BREAK!

SUSAN, LISTEN TO ME--I KNOW I HAVEN'T BEEN PAYING MUCH ATTENTION TO YOU LATELY. I'M SORRY FOR THAT.

REALLY.

BUT THIS...!

OPPORTUNITIES LIKE THIS DON'T COME AROUND VERY OFTEN, SO WE NEED TO SEIZE IT! AND I PROMISE, ONCE IT GETS OFF THE GROUND, ONCE JIM SHOWS THE WORLD WHAT HE'S CAPABLE OF, THERE WON'T BE ANY DOORS CLOSED TO US. YOU SAW WHAT HE DID! THEY'RE CALLING HIM A 'SAVIOR.'

YOU NEED TO TRUST ME...

"...I'VE GOT THIS *WHOLE SITUATION* COMPLETELY UNDER CONTROL!"

CLINK CLINKK SNIK

CLINKK K CHINK

CHINK CLANK

CLINK NKK SNIK

CLINK NIK CHINK

YOU'RE... PATHETIC!

WHAT'S THE MATTER? AFRAID OF US?

THEN SHOW YOURSELF!

WARRIORS FROM HELL DON'T HIDE--*WE FIGHT!* WE DESTROY! BECAUSE THE SECOND WE LET OUR GUARD DOWN--OUR ENEMIES WILL COME TO DESTROY US! THAT'S WHY HE CREATED US!

BOTH OF US!

BECAUSE WE'RE THE BASTARDS OF THIS WAR! WE DEFEND EVERYTHING BECAUSE WE BELONG TO *NOTHING!* WE'RE HALF-BREEDS THAT WILL ALWAYS BE REJECTED BY HELL AND EARTH. MALEBOLGIA NEEDS IT THAT WAY--KEEPING US DETACHED FROM EVERYTHING MEANS THERE'S LESS CHANCE WE'LL BE CORRUPTED.

AND THAT VOID IS WHAT FUELS THE ANGER IN US. THAT'S WHY WE'LL ALWAYS BE DANGEROUS TO THEM. MALEBOLGIA AND HIS DEVILS KNOW THEIR TIME WILL COME, AND THAT WE WILL LORD OVER THEM SOME DAY.

BUT THERE CAN ONLY BE *ONE KING!* I PLAN ON IT BEING ME.

NOW-- *SHOW YOURSELF... COWARD!*

gurk

unff

KRITCH

SHUT UP!!!

I'M GETTING SICK AND TIRED OF THIS!

EVERYONE WANTS TO TELL ME WHAT TO DO! WELL, I'M THROUGH WITH THAT. FROM NOW ON, I GIVE THE ORDERS!

I TELL YOU WHAT I WANT!!

hee hee HEE Ha HAAAA

YOU IDIOT! YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW WHY YOU'RE FIGHTING!

THIS IS FUNNY?

YOU THINK I'M SOME KIND OF A JOKE?

CHINK CLINK

THEN LET ME HELP YOU WITH THAT SMILE.

SPLAT

Minutes later.

IS THERE SOMETHING WRONG?

AL?

ARE YOU ANOTHER VAMPIRE?

WHERE'S AL?

ANSWER ME!

I JUST KILLED THREE OF YOUR BUDDIES!

YOU'RE UNDER ARREST!!

MOVE AND *I'LL BLOW* YOUR HEAD OFF!

THAT'S BEEN TRIED.

Vatican City.

< SIR, WE HAVE HIM ON THE LINE NOW. >*

*Translated from Italian--Todd

< PUT HIM THROUGH. AND I WANT A COPY OF THESE VIDEOS BY MORNING. >

< YES, SIR. >

< SORRY TO DISTURB YOUR SLEEP, YOUR EXCELLENCE. >

< WE'VE GOT A PROBLEM. >

To Be Continued

image

207

DIGITAL EDITION

SPAWN®

SZYMON KUDRANSKI

PULL THE TRIGGER.

I WANT YOU TO PULL THAT TRIGGER!

I'LL GET TO IT.

BUT, FIRST I WANT ANSWERS.

LIKE, WHERE'S AL? WHAT'RE YOU DOING IN HIS COSTUME? AND WHY'D YOU RUN FROM THE POLICE AFTER YOU SAVED THAT MAN?*

*Issue 205--Todd

SOMETHING ISN'T ADDING UP. SO, HELP ME OUT HERE. FIRST, YOU SAVE PEOPLE ON NATIONAL TV-- LETTING EVERYONE SEE YOUR FACE--THEN YOU TRY ESCAPING FROM IT? THOSE AREN'T THE ACTIONS OF A MAN WITH A CLEAR CONSCIENCE.

SO WHAT ARE YOU HIDING?

AND STOP WITH THE OOZING COSTUME TRICK. I'VE SEEN IT DONE BEFORE...BY MY FRIEND, AL.

NOW-- WHERE IS HE?

I DON'T GIVE A SHIT WHAT YOU WANT! AND YOU SEEM CONFUSED ABOUT A COUPLE OF THINGS.

FIRST...

I DON'T KNOW WHO YOUR FRIEND AL IS.

AND SECOND...

I'M ***THE ONE*** WHO'S GOING TO ASK QUESTIONS TONIGHT! NOT YOU!

STAY BACK! TAKE ANOTHER STEP AND I'LL DROP YOU!

PUT DOWN THE GUN.

QUIET! DON'T MOVE!

IF YOU REALLY KNOW ABOUT THIS COSTUME, THEN YOU UNDERSTAND BULLETS CAN'T HARM IT... OR ME. MEANING YOU'RE ***LYING*** TO ME! NOW WHO SENT YOU? BLUDD?

YOU ANOTHER ONE OF HIS VAMPIRES?

WHAT?!

I'M A DETECTIVE. AND YOU'RE UNDER ARREST!

LIKE I SAID. TRY PULLING THE TRIGGER.

FEX FEX

LUCKY FOR YOU, IT'S JAMMED.

NO, IT'S NOT.

IT'S BEING EATEN.

SO, I'LL ASK YOU AGAIN. WHY ARE YOU HERE, AND WHO SENT YOU?

NO ONE.

THEN-- HOW'D YOU FIND ME?

I DIDN'T.

I WASN'T LOOKING FOR YOU. I WAS TRYING TO HUNT DOWN AL-- THE GUY WHOSE COSTUME YOU'RE WEARING!

BUT YOU WANT ME TO BELIEVE YOU HAVEN'T SEEN HIM?

FOLLOW ME.

YOU KEEP TALKING ABOUT THIS COSTUME. WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT IT? AND WHY AREN'T YOU AFRAID OF IT?

BECAUSE THE MAN WHO OWNS IT ISN'T DANGEROUS. NOT TO THE RIGHT PEOPLE, ANYWAY. WHICH IS WHY I'M LOOKING FOR HIM. SEE, I'VE GOT A BIT OF AN EMERGENCY AND I NEED HIS HELP. NOW WHERE *THE HELL* IS SIMMONS?

WHAT'D YOU CALL HIM?

CUT THE CRAP! YOU KNOW HIS NAME-- IT'S AL SIMMONS.

HELLO?

ANYONE HERE?

I SAID... HELLO!

SOMEONE?

I don't like this.

Twitch Williams
CALLING...

tek

"YOU'VE REACHED DETECTIVE WILLIAMS I'M UNAVAILABLE AT THE MOMENT. IF THIS IS AN EMERGENCY, PLEASE DIAL 911. OTHERWISE, LEAVE YOUR NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION AND I'LL GET BACK TO YOU AS SOON AS POSSIBLE."

TWITCH, IT'S ROWAND.

I'M STILL AT THE HOSPITAL--BUT SOMETHING SEEMS ODD. IT'S LIKE A DAMN GHOST TOWN AROUND HERE. I KNOW IT'S LATE, BUT SHOULDN'T SOMEONE BE ON DUTY? I MEAN, YOU KNOW THIS PLACE BETTER THAN I DO.

IS THIS NORMAL?

ANYWAY, I'LL FIND A DOCTOR THEN CALL YOU BACK WITH SAM'S LATEST LAB--

CHKK

Department of Health
HEALTH BRANCH
BURKE, S.
TEMPERATURE CHART

CHkK

Department of Health
HEALTH BRANCH
BURKE, S.
TEMPERATURE CHART

I'LL CALL YOU BACK.

CHH-CLLKK

Department of Health
HEALTH BRANCH
BURKE, S.
TEMPERATURE CHART

SAM--?

THAT YOU?

I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON-- BUT I NEED YOU **DOWN** FROM THERE!

NOW!

DROP WHAT YOU'RE HOLDING, AND PUT YOUR ***HANDS*** WHERE I CAN SEE THEM! ***YOU HEAR ME?!***

I'M ***NOT*** PLAYING AROUND, LADY!

HHHHSSSSSSSSSSSSS

BLAM
BLAM
BLAM

SHIT.

YOU *SHOULDN'T* INTERFERE IN MATTERS THAT DON'T CONCERN YOU!

YOU *SHOULDN'T* INTERFERE!

YOU DON'T HAVE THE RIGHT!!

guh-
uk

screw...

YOU!!

MAD! THEY'LL BE MAD...

MUST LEAVE!

EXIT

christ almighty.

EXIT

KLIK

EXIT

MA'AM?!

THIS IS DETECTIVE CRAIG ROWAND! *I WORK FOR THE POLICE DEPARTMENT!*

YOU'RE ***SEVERELY*** WOUNDED AND NEED ***MEDICAL*** ATTENTION!

SO, I ***NEED*** YOU TO LISTEN TO ME.

STOP RUNNING AND COME OUT WHERE I CAN SEE YOU! THERE'S NO WAY OUT.

KRACK

FREEZE!

NOW... SLOWLY STEP DOWN FROM THAT LEDGE. YOU DON'T WANT TO JUMP.

I'M NOT HERE TO HURT YOU. I PROMISE.

YES, YOU ARE. IT'S WHAT YOU HUMANS DO. YOU HURT EACH OTHER.

LOOK, LADY, I KNOW YOU'RE CONFUSED, BUT YOU NEED HELP. WE NEED TO STOP YOUR BLEEDING. SO, PLEASE--JUST STEP AWAY FROM THE EDGE, AND WE CAN GO DOWNSTAIRS AND FIND A DOCTOR.

HE'S GOING TO REJECT YOU, TOO, JUST LIKE HE DID ME.*

WHO IS?

YOUR SAVIOR.

THE ONE CLOAKED IN RED. THE ONE WITH THE MASK.

*See *HELLSPAWN* issues 12 through 16--Todd.

I... I NEED YOU TO RELAX.

TAKE A DEEP BREATH AND COME TOWARDS ME. NICE AND SLOW. THIS WILL ALL BE OVER SOON.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT HE DID TO ME? TO MY HEART?

SOON HE'LL BE SORRY FOR THAT.

WAIT! DON'T JUMP!

BET HE THOUGHT I'D FORGOTTEN HIM.

THAT I DIDN'T CARE.

WELL, HE WAS WRONG.

I DIDN'T FORGET. I WAS WAITING.

AND NOW THE HELLSPAWN-- ALONG WITH THIS WRETCHED WORLD HE LIVES ON--WILL KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BECOME **COMPLETELY** FORSAKEN!

SOON YOU'LL BEAR WITNESS TO THE **COMING DAMNATION!** IT'S YOUR TASK TO TAKE THAT MESSAGE BACK TO HIM.

I'M SURE YOU'RE RIGHT-- WHATEVER YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT. JUST STEP DOWN FROM--

SILENCE!!

JUST TAKE HIM THE MESSAGE

NO!

WHERE ARE YOU TAKING ME??

JUST KEEP WALKING.

SO WHAT'S *YOUR* DEAL? YOU GOING TO BECOME SOME 'SUPERSTAR' CELEBRITY BY DAY--THEN TURN INTO SOME FREAKISH VIGILANTE AT NIGHT? SORRY TO BURST YOUR BUBBLE, BUT SOMEONE'S ALREADY CREATED THAT HOLLYWOOD CHARACTER. HE'S *CALLED* BATMAN! EVER HEARD OF HIM?

YOU TALK TOO MUCH.

AND THANKS FOR THE CHAIN CUFFS. I'M FLATTERED, ACTUALLY. I CAN SEE HOW MY 145 POUND DEFENSELESS BODY MIGHT INTIMIDATE YOU.

I'D HATE TO THINK WHAT YOU'D HAVE DONE IF YOU CAME ACROSS MY PARTNER.

WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

EXCUSE ME?

I SAID WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

MOST PEOPLE CALL ME TWITCH.

ALRIGHT, TWITCH, YOU SAID YOU WANTED ANSWERS. WELL SO DO I. BECAUSE IF YOU SAW ME ON TV YOU KNOW I CAN'T REMEMBER MY PAST--AND THAT'S *REALLY* BEGINNING TO PISS ME OFF!

BUT YOU SAID SOMETHING TONIGHT--SOMETHING I'M VERY CURIOUS ABOUT.

WHICH WAS?

AL SIMMONS.

THAT'S THE FIRST TIME I'D HEARD THOSE TWO NAMES PUT TOGETHER. SO WHAT I WANT TO KNOW...

IS THAT HIM?

my god... no!

WHAT DID YOU DO TO HIM?

KING'S TOMB

YOU SON OF A BITCH!

WHAT DID YOU DO!?

image

208

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WHY?

WHY ARE YOU--DOING THIS?

BECAUSE I WANT ANSWERS!

AND UNLESS YOU HAVE A DEATH WISH--YOU'RE GOING TO GIVE THEM TO ME!

NOW... WHO ARE YOU?

I TOLD YOU--I'M A COP. DETECTIVE WILLIAMS WITH THE...

DON'T PLAY GAMES WITH ME! I'M NOT *IN THE MOOD* FOR BULLSHIT!

I'M WITH THE N.Y.P.D.

YEAH? WELL THE LAST GUY WHO SAID THAT TO ME GOT HIS HEAD TORN OFF.*

SO CONVINCE ME WHY I SHOULDN'T DO THE SAME TO YOU.

*See issue 201--Todd

BECAUSE YOU CAN'T. AND YOU KNOW *THAT!*

YOU SEEMED SURPRISED I KNEW ABOUT AL AND HIS COSTUME. THAT INTRIGUES YOU.

SO, IF YOU WERE GOING TO KILL ME, I'M GUESSING YOU WOULD HAVE SNAPPED MY NECK TWENTY MINUTES AGO.

YOU'RE LOOKING FOR SOME-THING.

AND IF YOU DROP ME NOW, YOU MIGHT *NOT EVER* GET YOUR ANSWERS.

I DON'T THINK YOU'RE *THAT* STUPID.

SPECULATION IS STILL SWIRLING AROUND THE IDENTITY OF THE ALLEGED MIRACLE WORKER OF MIDTOWN MANHATTAN. WHILE THE POLICE CONTINUE TO SEARCH FOR HIM, THEY ARE RELUCTANT TO CONFIRM HIS NAME, THOUGH OUR SOURCES POINT TO A SINGLE INDIVIDUAL, ***JIM DOWNING***. EQUALLY DIFFICULT TO CONFIRM IS AMATEUR VIDEO OF THE ALLEGED RESURRECTION OF A HIT-AND-RUN VICTIM, WHICH HAS BECOME AN INTERNET SENSATION. IN JUST THE PAST FEW HOURS, YOUTUBE HAS LOGGED IT AT OVER A HALF MILLION VIEWERS.

IF, AS DOCTORS ARE TRYING TO ASCERTAIN, THE MYSTERY MAN DID INDEED HEAL THE FALLEN PHOTOGRAPHER WITH THE TOUCH OF HIS HANDS, THE MEDICAL AND RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES WILL BE INTERESTED IN WHAT HE HAS TO SAY.

MR. JIM DOWNING, THE ***MYSTERIOUS MIRACLE WORKER*** OF ***MANHATTAN,*** REMAINS SUCCESSFUL IN THE LESS MIRACULOUS FEAT OF ***EVADING A POLICE DRAGNET*** WITH HIS ***NAME*** ON IT. IN THE MEANTIME, THERE'S A ***FRENZY*** TO SEE WHO CAN GET THE NEXT ***INTERVIEW*** WITH THE LIFE-SAVER. WORD IS THAT THE ***KARLENE PHILLIPS SHOW*** WILL ***RERUN*** MR. DOWNING'S FIRST TELEVISED APPEARANCE FROM A FEW DAYS AGO. I WOULDN'T ***DOUBT*** THAT SHE'LL ***ALSO*** BE MARKETING A DISK OF ***OUTTAKES. KEEP IT ALIVE,*** BABY GIRL!

WITH ALL THIS ATTENTION FROM THE ***MEDIA, LAW*** ENFORCEMENT AND THE ***MEDICAL*** COMMUNITY, MR. DOWNING COULD EASILY BE THE ***BIGGEST*** NEWS STORY SINCE ***JUSTIN BEIBER'S*** WELL-CONSIDERED ***HAIRCUT.*** THERE'S EVEN TALK OF HAVING HIM HOST THE ***OSCARS! BRAVO!***

I THINK IT'S ***BRILLIANT,*** THE WAY HE'S BUILDING HIS ***BRAND.***

AND WE'RE OFF AND RUNNING!!

NOW WE'RE BEING TOLD THAT THIS ***DOWNING*** CHARACTER IS THE ***NEW MESSIAH.*** PLEASE, EVERYONE, GET ***OFF YOUR KNEES.*** FIRST, LET SOMEONE CHECK WITH ***PRESIDENT OBAMA*** FOR ***HIS*** COMMENTS, BECAUSE I THOUGHT ***HE*** WAS SUPPOSED TO BE THE LATEST AND GREATEST MESSIAH.

FOLKS, DO THEY ***REALLY*** THINK WE'RE ***MENTAL MIDGETS?*** THE ODDS OF THERE BEING NEW MESSIAHS IN ***TWO*** MAJOR MEDIA MARKETS ARE ***INCALCULABLE!!***

ANYWAY, ***SINCE WHEN*** DO WE LET THE ***MAIN-STREAM MEDIA*** TELL US WHO'S WORTHY OF OUR DEVOTION? I DON'T KNOW ABOUT ***YOU,*** BUT ***MY*** FAITH ISN'T GOING TO BE HIJACKED BY SOME ***HOMELESS REJECT*** FROM A ***MENTAL WARD!***... AT LEAST, ***NOT*** UNLESS HE CAN BRING MY ***FIRST WIFE*** BACK TO LIFE! THE NEXT MOVE IS ***YOURS,*** PAL!

"DO YOU UNDERSTAND THE MESS I'M GOING TO HAVE TO DEAL WITH, DETECTIVE ROWAND? SO TELL ME--WHAT DO YOU WANT US TO DO HERE? YOU HAVE ANY IDEA *HOW BAD* THIS LOOKS?

"GODDAMN MEDIA'S GOING TO TURN THIS SHIT-STORM INTO FRONT PAGE NEWS! NO ONE'S GOING TO EVER WANT TO GET THEIR FLU SHOTS AGAIN! SO, HELP ME OUT HERE BY ANSWERING A SIMPLE QUESTION.

"LIKE, WHY *THE HELL* ARE YOU EVEN IN MY CITY? VIRGINIA NOT EXCITING ENOUGH FOR YOU?"

I'M WORKING ON A CASE.

YEAH. WHAT KIND?

SUICIDE. A LAWYER WITH CONNECTIONS TO SOME PRETTY HIGH PROFILE FOLKS. AND PART OF OUR INVESTIGATION LED ME HERE.*

ANYONE KNOW YOU'RE IN TOWN?

I'M WORKING WITH DETECTIVES BURKE AND WILLIAMS FROM THE 23rd PRECINCT.

LOOK UP.

WHAT?

*See issue 185--Todd

I SAID LOOK UP. I WANT TO SEE YOUR NECK.

THEY TELL ME THE NURSE DID THAT TO YOU. THAT CORRECT?

THAT'S RIGHT.

DISPATCH SAID A "MONSTER" ATTACKED YOU. THAT YOU USED THE WORD "MONSTER" TO DESCRIBE YOUR ASSAILANT. SEEMS LIKE AN ODD CHOICE OF WORDS. WHAT'D YOU MEAN BY THAT?

SHE DIDN'T ACT HUMAN. *THAT'S* WHAT I MEANT. DO YOUR HOMEWORK, YOU'LL COME TO THE SAME CONCLUSION.

DON'T TELL US HOW TO DO OUR JOB. WE'RE NOT THE ONES POPPING NURSES IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT. JUST TELL US ABOUT THIS "MONSTER" OF YOURS.

I WAS WAITING FOR DETECTIVE WILLIAMS, WHOSE PARTNER IS LYING IN A BED UPSTAIRS. HE WANTED ME TO COME CHECK ON BURKE, SEE HOW HE WAS DOING. WHEN I GOT TO HIS FLOOR I THOUGHT IT SEEMED A LITTLE TOO QUIET. SO I WENT TO HIS ROOM.

WHEN I WALKED IN THE NURSE WAS ON TOP OF HIM.

I MEAN SHE WAS LITERALLY ON THE BED ATTACKING HIM. AND HER RIGHT HAND WAS INCHES AWAY FROM INJECTING HIM WITH--I DON'T KNOW--WITH SOMETHING. I ORDERED HER TO STEP AWAY FROM BURKE, AND BEFORE I COULD DO ANYTHING SHE WAS AT MY THROAT.

SHE WAS UNNATURALLY STRONG--AND FAST. I DON'T KNOW HOW SHE MOVED LIKE THAT. AND I WAS JUST REACTING. FIGURED SHE WAS WIRED ON A HEAVY DOSE OF SOMETHING. METH. COKE. I DON'T KNOW.

BUT I PUT TWO SLUGS IN HER CHEST AND ANOTHER FIVE IN HER GUT--AND SHE STILL DIDN'T STOP. NOT UNTIL...

UNTIL WHAT?

THE ROOF.

DON'T KNOW HOW SHE MADE IT THERE. SHE WAS STREAMING BLOOD THE ENTIRE TIME.

YOU'LL SEE THE CONDITION SHE WAS IN AFTER YOU FIND HER. HAVE YOU DONE THAT YET?

FIND HER? OH-- WE'VE ***DONE THAT.***

SHE WAS PRETTY HARD TO MISS.

INTERESTING.

THE COLOR OF YOUR BLOOD SAYS YOU *ARE* HUMAN.

WHAT WERE YOU THINKING?

uh...?

HELLO.

WHO'S THERE?

jesus christ.

MAX...?

IT... CAN'T... BE.

HEY, DAD. IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME.

SON?

MAX-- IS THIS *REALLY* YOU?

YOUR MOM AND I -- WE'VE MISSED YOU SO MUCH.

I KNOW. I HEAR HER TALKING TO ME EVERY NIGHT.

SHE'S LOST WITHOUT YOU. I SEE IT IN HER EYES.

I'M SORRY, DAD.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU'RE SORRY? FOR WHAT?

EVERY-THING. I'M JUST SORRY FOR *EVERY-THING.*

DON'T. YOU'VE DONE NOTHING WRONG. IT WAS ME--I'M THE ONE THAT SHOULD BE...

DAD.

THAT'S NOT IMPORTANT, OKAY? IT'S NOT WHY I'M HERE.

I NEED YOU TO LISTEN TO ME. SOMETHING BAD IS COMING.

SOME-THING *REALLY* BAD.

WHAT'S YOUR GUT INSTINCT ON THIS ONE?

HARD TO TELL. I LIKE THAT HE WAS SUPPOSEDLY PROTECTING A FELLOW OFFICER--AND THE MISSING HOSPITAL STAFF SOUND LIKE SOMETHING BIGGER THAN A ROGUE COP.

YEAH, WELL CITY HALL ISN'T GOING TO BE IMPRESSED THAT OUR ONLY WITNESS IS AN OUT OF TOWN DETECTIVE WHOSE MENTAL STATE CAN EASILY BE CALLED INTO QUESTION AFTER TONIGHT.

WHAT'RE YOU SAYING? THAT HE HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH THIS?

WE KNOW HE HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH IT. QUESTION IS--WAS IT ACTION OR REACTION?

SHOULD WE GET THE FEDS INVOLVED?

NOT YET.

LET'S POKE HIM A BIT MORE, SEE WHERE IT TAKES US.

HERE YA GO.

THANKS.

SO, ROWAND-- HELP US UNDERSTAND SOME-THING--

PHONE NUMBERS. CREDIT CARD PURCHASES. AND THE LAW FIRM HE WORKED AT HAD A FEW CLIENTS THAT OVER-LAPPED OUR TWO CITIES. LAST PERSON MY DECEASED TALKED TO WAS FROM HERE.

YOU SAID YOU'RE WORKING ON A CASE BACK HOME. WHAT'S THE TIE TO NEW YORK?

YOU ALSO SAID YOU WERE WAITING FOR DETECTIVE WILLIAMS, BUT NO ONE'S BEEN ABLE TO REACH HIM FOR THE PAST FEW HOURS--ANY IDEA WHERE HE MIGHT BE? ESPECIALLY GIVEN THE, YOU KNOW...

"...THE CIRCUMSTANCES HERE."

HE DIDN'T SAY.

NOTHING? HE DIDN'T GIVE YOU ANY IDEA WHERE HE WAS?

ONLY THAT HE WAS GOING TO LOOK UP AN OLD CONTACT OF HIS.

EXCUSE ME, SIR? SORRY TO INTERRUPT. I KNOW YOU DIDN'T WANT TO BE DISTURBED, BUT...

THIS HAD BETTER BE GOOD! WE'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF AN INTERROGATION.

INTERROGATION?!

CALM THE F**K DOWN, ROWAND! NOW, WHAT IS IT ROOKIE?

YOU'LL WANT TO COME WITH ME. WE FOUND SOMETHING.

I KNOW THIS MIGHT ALL BE OVER-WHELMING TO YOU, BUT I NEED YOU TO HEAR THIS.

DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN YOU RESCUED ME FROM THOSE ***VAMPIRES*** AND THEN FROM THAT HOUSE?* WELL, WHEN I WAS THERE I DID SOME STUPID THINGS. GOT CAUGHT UP WITH SOME BAD PEOPLE BEFORE YOU SAVED ME.

BUT THE THING IS--YOU DIDN'T SAVE ME--NOT REALLY. I KNOW YOU TRIED, BUT IT WAS TOO LATE. I WASN'T ME ANYMORE. NOT THE ***SAME*** ME, ANYWAY--I WAS DIFFERENT.

I AM DIFFERENT.

*See issue 131--Todd

MAX, YOU'RE NOT MAKING ANY SENSE.

PLEASE... JUST LISTEN TO ME. I DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME.

I'M TRYING TO ***PROTECT*** YOU, LIKE YOU ALWAYS TRIED TO PROTECT ME. SO I NEED TO EXPLAIN SOMETHING, BUT--IT'S COMPLICATED.

AND YOU CAN'T LET MOM KNOW WE MET. OR THEY'LL COME FOR HER TOO.

OH CRAP!
NO!
WHAT IS IT?!
GOODBYE, DAD...
I LOVE YOU.
HE'LL KILL US ALL!
HE'S AFTER THE SUIT-- MR. SIMMONS' SUIT. YOU CAN'T LET HIM GET IT. DON'T LET HIM TAKE CONTROL.
BUT YOU NEED TO KNOW HIS NAME. BLUDD. HIS NAME IS *BLUDD.* YOU *HAVE TO* STOP HIM!
THEY FOUND ME! I HAVE TO GO!
MAX!
REMEMBER-- HIS NAME IS *BLUDD.*
NO!
DON'T GO! PLEASE DON'T LEAVE ME...
...AGAIN.*

*See ***CASE FILES 6*** for the death of Twitch's son --Todd

gasp!

max?

WHO'S MAX?

GO TO HELL.

I'M DONE TALKING TO YOU.

leave me alone.

CAN'T DO THAT.

LIKE YOU SAID--I CAN'T AFFORD TO KILL YOU. AT LEAST NOT YET.

AND WHAT IF I REFUSE?

YOU BROKE MY GLASSES.

asshole.

YOU ALREADY KNOW THE ANSWER TO THAT AND YOU STRIKE ME AS SOMEONE SMART ENOUGH TO WANT TO STAY ALIVE.

DON'T THINK I HAVE AN EXTRA PAIR ANYMORE.

WHICH MEANS YOU'LL TELL ME ABOUT MY COSTUME--AND AL SIMMONS. AND ANY-THING ELSE I WANT TO KNOW.

I'M WAITING.

REALLY?

GOOD! BECAUSE HERE'S HOW IT'S GOING TO BE. I DON'T LIKE YOU! AND AFTER DROPPING ME OFF THAT BUILDING, I'LL ASSUME THE FEELING'S MUTUAL. OUR ***DISTRUST*** FOR EACH OTHER MIGHT BE THE ONLY THING WE'LL HAVE IN COMMON.

AND WHETHER YOU REALIZE IT OR NOT, YOU'RE GOING TO NEED MY HELP BECAUSE SOMEONE WANTS THAT COSTUME YOU STOLE FROM AL. IF THEY GET IT, WE'RE SCREWED! NOT JUST YOU AND I... BUT ALL OF US.

SO, THOUGH I'D RATHER NOT, HERE'S WHAT I KNOW...

THIS WAY, DETECTIVES.

AM I GOING TO LIKE THIS?

THROUGH THERE. ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE NURSE'S STATION.

THIS IS RODGERS--WE'RE ON THE NORTHEAST CORNER OF FLOOR SEVENTEEN. ORDERS WERE GIVEN TO CLOSE OFF THIS AREA. HAS IT STARTED YET?

IS THAT...?

THE STAFF.

image

209

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SZYMON KUDRANSKI

I'VE ALREADY SEEN THIS.

BUT DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT IS?

YEAH-- SOME CRAPPY FURNITURE.

NO.

IT'S A THRONE.

HIS THRONE.

AND THESE ALLEYS-- THEY WERE HIS HOME.

WHAT?

YOU'RE TELLING ME HE LIVED HERE?

FULL-TIME?

YES.

IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE.

I KNOW.

WHY WOULD HE DO THAT? IF HE HAD THE SAME POWERS I DO, WHY COULDN'T HE USE THOSE TO HIS ADVANTAGE?

BECAUSE HE DIDN'T HAVE A CHOICE.

THERE'S ALWAYS A CHOICE.

BELIEVE ME-- I TOLD HIM THAT AT LEAST A DOZEN TIMES. BUT HE WOULDN'T LISTEN.

HE WAS ALWAYS TORTURING HIMSELF EMOTIONALLY.

SO HE WASN'T ALL THERE MENTALLY. FINE--WHATEVER. BUT SOMEONE WAS AFRAID OF HIM. OTHERWISE WHY KILL HIM?

YOU TELL ME.

UNH?

WAS IT YOU? DID YOU KILL AL?

NO.

AT LEAST AS FAR AS I KNOW.

WHAT THE HELL *IS THAT* SUPPOSED TO MEAN?

IT MEANS I'M STILL LOOKING FOR ANSWERS, SINCE I CAN'T RECALL *A GODDAMN THING* ABOUT MY PAST! SO--DID I KILL YOUR FRIEND?

NO! NOT THAT I REMEMBER. WE'LL JUST HAVE TO LEAVE IT AT THAT.

INSTEAD, YOU'D BETTER START GIVING ME SOMETHING, BECAUSE SO FAR ALL YOU'VE DONE IS STALL AND I'M ABOUT TO GET ***PISSED OFF!*** YOU UNDERSTAND?

YEAH. WE'VE ALREADY ESTABLISHED WHO HAS THE POWER HERE.*

THEN TELL ME ABOUT SIMMONS.

*Last issue--Todd

FINE. ON ONE CONDITION.

YOU'RE IN NO POSITION TO BARGAIN.

AND NEITHER ARE YOU! SO YOU WANT ANSWERS, THEN YOU'RE GOING TO DO ME A FAVOR AFTERWARDS.

DEPENDS ON HOW GOOD YOUR STORY IS.

OH, IT'S A GOOD ONE...

BOYS SCREAMED AND GIRLS SCREAMED SO I MADE HIM SCREAM AND SCREAM AND SCREAM...

"THE FIRST TIME I BECAME AWARE OF AL, I HAD A DEAD PEDOPHILE HANGING IN MY OFFICE*. IT TOLD ME HE COULD BE BRUTAL, BUT WITH REASON. HE DIDN'T LIKE OTHERS MESSING WITH WEAKER PEOPLE.

*Way back in issue 5--Todd

"THAT'S WHY HE PROTECTED THE HOMELESS WHO ROAMED THESE ALLEYS. BECAUSE HE FELT LIKE THEY'D BEEN DUMPED ON ENOUGH. OR PERHAPS HE TOOK COMFORT IN BEING AROUND OTHER LOST SOULS.

"WHATEVER DROVE HIM, HE COULDN'T ESCAPE HIS PAST. AS A COVERT OPERATOR FOR THE U.S. GOVERNMENT, HE WAS TRAINED TO KILL WITH PRECISION. AND LIKE A GOOD SOLDIER, HE DID IT WITHOUT QUESTION FOR YEARS. BUT SOMEWHERE ALONG THE LINE HE BEGAN TO ASK QUESTIONS. AND WHEN HE DID--THEY SIMPLY KILLED HIM.

"BUT SOMEHOW HE CHEATED DEATH--FOR A PRICE. YEARS LATER HE RETURNED TO EARTH AS A SPAWN. CONFUSED. DAZED. A MAN WITH NO PLACE TO GO. JUST LIKE YOU ARE NOW. AND INSTEAD OF FINDING PEACE OR GETTING BACK TO THE WOMAN HE LOVED, HIS LIFE WAS A CONSTANT WAR.

"AND LIKE YOU RIGHT NOW, I DIDN'T TRUST HIM EITHER. HE WAS ARROGANT, COCKY, AND ACTED STUPID AS HELL.

"THAT'S WHEN I MET HIM FACE TO FACE.

"SO HE FOUGHT BACK. DOING WHATEVER HE NEEDED TO SHOW THEM HE WAS GOING TO BE HIS OWN MAN. THAT NO ONE WAS EVER GOING TO CONTROL HIM AGAIN.

"WHETHER IT WAS AGAINST THOSE HE USED TO WORK FOR OR SOME SUPER-NATURAL FORCE, THEY ALL CAME AT HIM. RELENTLESSLY.

TOP SECRET

"BUT OVER TIME--DESPITE THE CONSTANT STRUGGLE OVER ALL THE MADNESS AND CHAOS THAT HAD BECOME HIS LIFE--HE SHOWED ME THAT HE WAS A MAN OF INTEGRITY AND CONVICTION. AND MOST IMPORTANTLY WAS WILLING TO STAND UP FOR OTHERS.

"SO WAS HE A KILLER? YES. DID HE MURDER OTHERS FOR THE GREATER CAUSE OF SOME SUPPOSED AMERICAN LIBERTY AND FREEDOM? YES.

"BUT IN THE END HE REGRETTED THOSE ACTIONS WHEN HE LEARNED HIS SIDE WAS AS MANIPULATIVE AND POWER CRAZED AS THE ENEMIES.

"THAT'S PART OF THE REASON HE ISOLATED HIMSELF FROM THE WORLD. HE WAS RACKED WITH GUILT, SO HE DECIDED THAT INSTEAD OF BOWING TO THE WISHES OF HEAVEN OR HELL OR ANY HUMAN--HE'D FIGHT FOR HIS OWN PERSONAL FREEDOM, AND THAT OF THE PEOPLE AROUND HIM.

I THINK THAT'S WHY HE FOUGHT SO HARD FOR THOSE IN THE ALLEYS. BECAUSE HE KNEW WHAT IT MEANT TO HAVE LOST EVERYTHING.

"BUT AT HIS CORE HE WAS A GOOD MAN. A VERY GOOD MAN. NOW THAT YOU'VE BEEN GIVEN HIS POWERS AND HIS COSTUME IT MEANS YOU'VE EITHER STOLEN THEM OR YOU'RE A GOOD MAN, TOO."

"BECAUSE HE'D LOST THE *ONE THING* THAT GAVE HIS EXISTENCE ANY MEANING. HIS WIFE.

"THIS DESPITE THE ONLY REASON FOR HIS EXISTENCE. THE ONLY REASON HE EVER WANTED TO RETURN TO EARTH HAD BEEN TAKEN FROM HIM.

I'D LIKE TO FIND OUT WHICH IT IS.

HOW'S ANY OF THAT SUPPOSED TO HELP ME?

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

DETAILS.

TO WHAT?

ALL OF IT! EVERYTHING! YOU'VE ONLY TOLD ME SURFACE STUFF. SO, GIVEN THAT ANY OF IT'S TRUE--I WANT NAMES. ADDRESSES. WITNESSES. BECAUSE IF I CAN GET MY HANDS ON ANY OF THESE PEOPLE YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT, I'LL MAKE THEM TELL ME WHAT I WANT TO KNOW.

WHAT IF THEY DON'T HAVE ANY ANSWERS?

I'LL KEEP LOOKING. BECAUSE SOMEONE HAS TO KNOW WHO I AM AND ***WHAT THE CHRIST*** I'M SUPPOSED TO BE DOING WITH THESE POWERS! SOMEONE TOLD ME THAT AL MIGHT HAVE PICKED ME SPECIFICALLY FOR THIS CRAZY BATTLE BETWEEN...

WHO TOLD YOU THAT?

IT'S NOT IMPORTANT. WHAT IS, IS WHY WOULD YOUR FRIEND HAVE PICKED ME--CHOSEN ME FOR ALL OF THIS SHIT--WHEN HE DIDN'T EVEN KNOW ME?!

HE WOULDN'T.

WHAT?

YOU THINK I KNEW HIM?! I'VE BEEN IN A GOD-DAMN COMA FOR THE PAST FIVE YEARS!! SO STOP F*@CKING WITH ME!!

ALRIGHT! ALRIGHT! CALM DOWN.

I TOLD YOU I'D HELP. I'LL MAKE A COPY OF ALL MY FILES AND BRING THOSE TO YOU. THEN I CAN USE THE POLICE DATABASE TO SEE IF ANY OF WHAT YOU KNOW, ALONG WITH WHAT I KNOW, HAS ANY OVERLAP. WE'LL START THERE FIRST. IF I HAVE TO I'LL KNOCK ON EVERY DOOR OF ANYONE THAT'S EVER BEEN NEAR YOU OR AL.

DOES THAT WORK FOR YOU?

OKAY.

YOU SAID SOMETHING ABOUT WANTING A FAVOR FROM ME?

I DID.

I NEED YOU TO HELP ANOTHER FRIEND OF MINE. DO THAT AND YOU CAN KILL ME WHENEVER YOU FEEL LIKE IT.

THAT'S SOME KIND OF FRIEND. WHERE IS HE?

IN THE HOSPITAL DYING.

YOU DON'T SEEM SCARED AT WHAT YOU'RE SEEING, DETECTIVE.

SADLY, I'VE SEEN IT BEFORE. WHEN DID YOU KILL THESE?

LAST NIGHT.

Forty minutes later.

I'LL DEAL WITH THAT LATER. FIRST I WANT TO CHECK MY...

Menu

27 MISSED CALLS

JESUS!

THIS ISN'T GOOD.

LOOK-- I NEED TO GET INSIDE. NOW! I THINK SOMETHING MAY HAVE HAPPENED TO MY FRIEND AND THE STATION'S BEEN TRYING TO...

WHAT'S HIS NAME?

Hunh?

YOUR FRIEND. WHAT'S HIS NAME?

SAM. WHY'RE YOU ASKING?

AND WHAT HAPPENS IF I'M NOT HERE?

THEN I'LL PHONE EVERY MEDIA OUTLET I CAN, AND TELL THEM YOU'RE ACTUALLY A ***SADISTIC KILLER*** -- NOT THE ROMANTIC FAITH HEALER THEY'RE MAKING YOU OUT TO BE.

THOSE POLICE CARS-- THEY HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH SAM DON'T THEY?

I DON'T KNOW-- MAYBE-- BUT I'VE GOT TO GO INSIDE. WE'LL JUST PUT MY PLAN ON HOLD UNTIL I KNOW IT'S SAFE FOR YOU. SO-- HERE'S OUR MOMENT OF TRUTH. I HOPE YOU'LL STILL BE HERE WHEN I GET BACK.

WHEN WILL THAT BE?

I DON'T KNOW! WHEN I'M DONE! JUST STAY OUT OF SIGHT.

THAT'LL SHUT DOWN ANY CHANCE YOU'LL HAVE OF EARNING MONEY AND LIVING A NORMAL LIFE. NOT TO MENTION COPS WILL HUNT YOU DOWN FOREVER.

SO DO THE RIGHT THING.

AND DON'T MAKE ME REGRET THIS.

I was thinking the same thing.

EXCUSE ME! THIS FLOOR IS OFF LIMITS TO...

DETECTIVE WILLIAMS. MY PARTNER'S IN ONE OF THE BEDS HERE.

YOU MEAN DETECTIVE BURKE?

THAT'S HIM. SOMETHING WRONG?

NO. GO AHEAD.

DETECTIVE

POLICE

DETECTIVE WILLIAMS?

I THOUGHT THAT MIGHT BE YOU.

WE'VE BEEN TRYING TO CONTACT YOU, AND I'M SURE YOUR VIRGINIA FRIEND ROWAND HAS, TOO. WE'D LIKE TO CORROBORATE A FEW FACTS WITH YOU IF WE CAN.

WE ONLY NEED A BIT OF YOUR TIME FOR A FEW QUESTIONS...

IS IT SAM? IS HE STILL ALIVE?

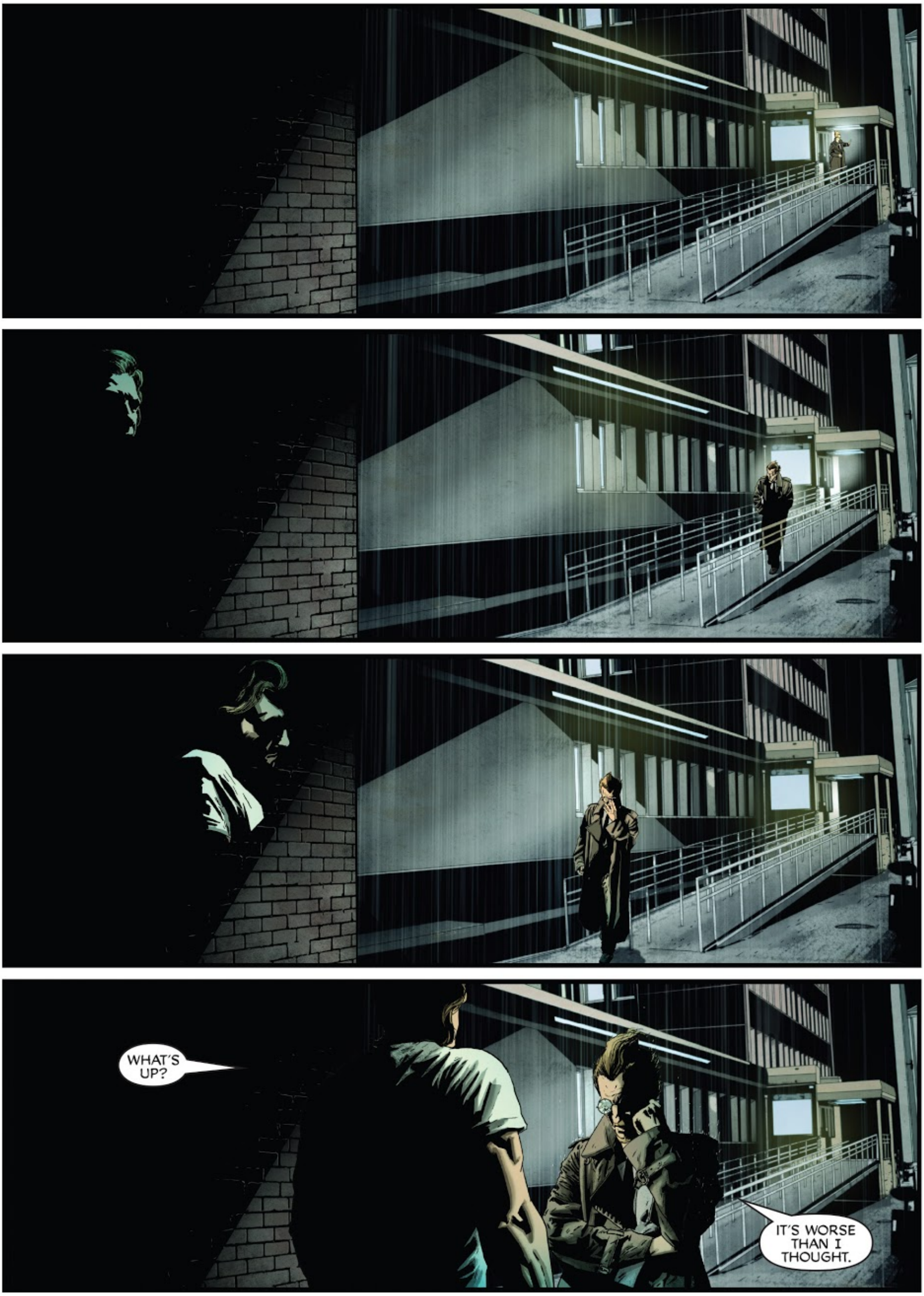
YEAH. YEAH. HE'S FINE.

BUT IT APPEARS HE MAY HAVE BEEN THE TARGET OF SOME--LET'S SAY--UNUSUAL ACTIVITIES BY ONE OF THE NURSES. THOUGH WE HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO PIECE IT ALL TOGETHER YET. AND BEFORE YOU ASK, THE NURSE COMMITTED SUICIDE BEFORE WE GOT HERE. THE ONLY ONE THAT HAD CONTACT WITH HER BEFORE WE ARRIVED WAS DETECTIVE ROWAND.

AND SO FAR HIS STORY IS A LITTLE TOUGH TO SWALLOW.

A SUICIDE? WHY SO MANY SQUAD CARS OUTSIDE THEN?

BECAUSE I'VE ALSO GOT *EIGHT* DEAD BODIES. ALL HOSPITAL STAFF. LET'S STEP INTO A ROOM AND I CAN FILL YOU IN.


WHAT'S UP?
IT'S WORSE THAN I THOUGHT.

New York City Morgue

ZIPPP

YOU DUMB BITCH.

WAKE UP!

WE NEED TO TALK.

Gasp!

I GAVE YOU ONE SIMPLE TASK. *ONE JOB!*

TO KEEP THE FAT DETECTIVE IN HIS BED. THAT WAS ALL.*

A STRANGER... CAME IN.

*Issue 207--Todd

DON'T GIVE ME *EXCUSES!*

YOU'VE *NO IDEA* WHAT'S AT STAKE HERE! IF YOU DID--YOU'D HAVE BEEN *MUCH MORE* DISCREET.

I'M GROWING **SICK** OF YOUR GAMES, CLOWN. ALWAYS PLANNING. ALWAYS WAITING.

IT'S NOT A GAME! *NONE OF THIS IS!* THAT'S WHY YOU KEEP MAKING MISTAKES-- BECAUSE YOU KEEP FORGETTING THAT!

AND I'M JUST ABOUT OUT OF PATIENCE WITH YOU.

YOU'RE NOT MY MASTER.

YOU KEEP FORGETTING THAT! I DEAL WITH THINGS THE WAY AN **EMPRESS OF HELL** SHOULD.

WERE.

YOU WERE AN EMPRESS. *NOT ANY MORE!* THE SOONER YOU FIGURE THAT OUT THE BETTER WE'LL ALL BE.

I REMEMBER.

AND YOU'RE WRONG! *I AM YOUR MASTER!* IN THIS WORLD, AT LEAST. OR HAVE YOU ALSO FORGOTTEN HOW I SAVED YOU?

GOOD! BECAUSE YOU PULL ANOTHER STUNT LIKE YOU DID TONIGHT AND I'LL FEED YOU TO THE DOGS. I RECRUITED YOU FOR A PURPOSE, WHICH WAS TO STAND WATCH OVER DETECTIVE BURKE. HE'S HIDING SOMETHING FROM US. SOMETHING THE FORCES OF HELL WANT.

AND IF THEY FIND IT--THEY WON'T HESITATE COMING AFTER EITHER OF US BECAUSE WE'VE BECOME TRAITORS TO THEM! SO IF YOU HOPE TO SURVIVE--I NEED YOUR LOYALTY.

DO I HAVE THAT?

YES.

FOR NOW.

I'LL TAKE THAT.

BUT FIRST WE NEED TO CORRECT ONE THING. THIS BODY YOU'RE IN--IT'S RUN ITS COURSE. IT'S NO LONGER USEFUL. SO LIE BACK. I'LL RETURN WITH A MORE SUITABLE ONE.

AND WAIT UNTIL YOU SEE WHO I HAVE IN MIND.